

# CHARTIST

#302 January/February 2020

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## Disunited Kingdom

*Don Flynn*

*Duncan Bowie*

*Mary Southcott*

*Tom Miller*

*Bryn Jones*

**GE19 ANALYSIS**

*Glyn Ford*

*Julie Ward*

**Europe after Brexit**

*Peter Cole*

**Climate Emergency**

*Apsana Begum*

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**New MPs**

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**Chile erupts**

**plus**

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# CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

## Editorial Policy

The editorial policy of CHARTIST is to promote debate amongst people active in radical politics about the contemporary relevance of democratic socialism across the spectrum of politics, economics, science, philosophy, art, interpersonal relations – in short, the whole realm of social life.

Our concern is with both democracy and socialism. The history of the last century has made it abundantly clear that the mass of the population of the advanced capitalist countries will have no interest in any form of socialism which is not thoroughly democratic in its principles, its practices, its morality and its ideals. Yet the consequences of this deep attachment to democracy – one of the greatest advances of our epoch – are seldom reflected in the discussion and debates amongst active socialists.

CHARTIST is not a party publication. It brings together people who are interested in socialism, some of whom are active the Labour Party and the trade union movement. It is concerned to deepen and extend a dialogue with all other socialists and with activists from other movements involved in the struggle to find democratic alternatives to the oppression, exploitation and injustices of capitalism and class society

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

## Contributions and letters deadline for

### CHARTIST #303 10 February 2020

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## Editorial Board

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# Putney Victory

## Robbie Scott on how Putney became Labour's only Tory scalp

If we were going to be successful in Putney, we would have to run one of the most innovative campaigns since the 'Battle for Barking' when we destroyed the BNP in East London. We achieved this in three main ways.

1) We embedded ourselves in local community groups before the election was called. An active community approach was essential. We talked up Labour's transformative manifesto, our record in government, at City Hall and the achievements of our local councillors. Our parliamentary candidate was part of a larger Labour team who was already delivering for residents.

2) We relentlessly exploited the

growing tensions between small C conservative voters and the government. First on their austerity agenda and as the campaign gathered pace on Brexit. This helped steer local opinion and secure the endorsement of all the tactical voting websites in a constituency that overwhelmingly voted to Remain.

3) We effectively managed thousands of volunteers throughout the campaign. We knew the lion's share would probably come from Momentum and it did - but given all of the other high profile races across London that wouldn't be enough. The campaign had to be broad. This was by far the most tricky aspect to manage. Whatever your politics



**Robbie Scott was agent and campaign organiser for Putney Labour's Fleur Anderson won with 4,774 majority and a 6.4% swing to Labour. He is also a member of Chartist EB**

or internal party grouping, there was something for you to do. A leaflet you'd like - a canvass or task you'd be keen to help with. Targeting voters is a well-known campaign technique. Our volunteers were organised in precisely the same way.

We had the bodies to expand our core and reach out to new support, to squeeze the Lib Dem and Green vote and develop relationships with swing voters by canvassing the same streets multiple times with the same volunteers. The word soon got out that in Putney we did things a little differently. After that things exploded with hundreds of volunteers a night and an Election Day run by over 1,000 volunteers.





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Cover by Martin Rowson

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FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM

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## OUR HISTORY

## OUR HISTORY - 88

Stuart Holland  
The Socialist Challenge (1975)

Stuart Holland was an Oxford educated economist, with degrees in history and economics, who on graduating worked with the economist Thomas Balogh and then in the cabinet office for Harold Wilson in 1964. After a research fellowship at Sussex University, he then in 1974 became advisor to Judith Hart, the Minister for International Development. In 1972 he had published a study of 'The State as Entrepreneur'. This led to his involvement in developing the Labour Party's economic strategy while Labour was in opposition, submitting a number of papers to the National Executive Committee and its sub-committees, with many of his ideas being incorporated into the Labour Programme 1973 and the manifesto for the February 1974 election.

In 1979, Holland was elected as MP for Vauxhall in London. He stood down in 1989 to return to academia, moving to the European University Institute in Florence. Having taught at a range of universities and written numerous books and articles, Holland, now 79, is attached to the University of Coimbra in Portugal.

Holland challenged the mixed economy perspective presented by Anthony Crosland in his *Future of Socialism* and subsequent works, which dominated Labour Party economic thinking until the early 1970's. Holland was influenced by the French experience of economic planning and the Belgian socialist Prime Minister Paul Henri Spaak and President of the European Steel and Coal Community and was involved in the development of Labour Party policy on the Common Market in the 1960's and the development of the Treaty of Rome. He now focuses mainly on European and international economics. He has maintained an interest in international development, having served as shadow Minister between 1983 and 1987, under Kinnock's leadership. He has written a book on Eritrea.

*The Socialist Challenge*, published in 1975, set out the theoretical basis and the programme that was to become known as the Alternative Economic Strategy. At the time the Labour Party NEC and the shadow cabinet were dominated by a left-wing group which included Tony Benn, Ian Mikardo, Eric Heffer, Judith Hart and Albert Booth. Tony Benn as Secretary of State for Industry tried to implement the strategy, but was moved to Energy secretary where he had less influence. The

story of the rise and fall of the new economic policy is told in John Medhurst's *That Option no longer Exists*, published in 2014.

"What is the socialist challenge? Essentially, it is the claim that we can transform the injustice, inequality and inefficiency of modern capitalism. In Britain in the early 1970's the Labour Party shaped a radical new strategy for the beginnings of such transformation. The programme for extended

public ownership, strategic planning and workers' democracy opened the feasibility of a genuine transition to socialism in a democratic society. For the first time since the immediate post-war period, the socialist challenge moved from theory to the politics of a mass party in government."

"The main dimensions of Labour's socialist challenge include not only a penetration of the commanding heights of modern capitalism in the meso-economic sector, but also a simultaneous transformation of the prevailing class structures which concentrate economic and social power in the hands of a largely self-perpetuating oligarchy. This can never be a complete or final process. There is no socialist utopia at the end of a specific programme for transformation."

"Socialism is the creation of a society in which it is easier to secure self-fulfilment through serving society than through the exclusive pursuit of self alone. .. It is a society in which people are both practical and idealists."

"Progress to socialism should be an on-going process, but one in which the critical centres of capitalist power and class were transformed by a socialist government, backed by the trade unions. It is a key premise of this analysis that such transformation can be achieved through democratic processes. Without

such democratic change, transition to socialism could prove less a controlled transition in the public interest, an explosion of social resentment and political counter-reaction challenging freedoms which are rightly held dear even in a economically unjust society. On the other hand, such democratic reforms must be effectively revolutionary in character. In other words, they must reverse the current dominance of capitalist modes of production and capitalist motivation into a dominance of democratically controlled socialism. They must transform capitalist society rather than try ineffectively to alleviate its implicit injustice."



# Long haul for Labour

**L**abour suffered a heavy defeat on 12<sup>th</sup> December. Identifying the reasons for failure to unseat a Tory government presiding over nine years of austerity will rightly occupy some time. Reasons include Brexit, Jeremy Corbyn personally, the wrong time, an overfull manifesto lacking in clear priorities, a poorly organised campaign, a hostile media, Conservative lies and many more.

Labour achieved 10.5 million votes, more than Gordon Brown in 2010 and more than Ed Miliband in 2015. But the 80 seat Tory majority was the worst Labour loss since 1935. We lost in Leave voting areas and failed to achieve key target seats in Remain voting areas. One factor stands out: Labour lost significant votes in traditional working class heartlands—the North East, the Midlands and north Wales, not to mention a near wipe-out in Scotland, which raises the prospect of the break-up of Britain. Labour held votes among youth and those in cosmopolitan centres. The loss of numerous seats held by Labour for decades—Bolsover, Workington, Blyth, Sedgefield illustrates that class can no longer be a sure predictor of voting intention.

**Don Flynn** looks at this factor and how Corbynism energised a whole new generation while looking at ways to sustain and build allegiance. **Paul**

**Salveson** explores in more detail the contrast in Tory promises and the reality for northern towns.

Similarly, **Bryn Jones** finds opportunities for a Labour counter-offensive against Johnson's economic populism. Ever since the deindustrialisation of the Thatcher years, areas of the north have suffered a slow economic and social decline. The Blair years did little to rebuild infrastructure and more importantly working class culture in these shattered communities. Young people migrated to the cities leaving an aging population vulnerable to the siren calls of the Brexiteers with their scapegoating demonisation of Brussels and Europe and foreign migrants.

The years of neoliberal economic policies offered the concession to wage earners that there would be 'British jobs for British workers'. Whatever Gordon Brown meant with this utterance it was understood to be a continuation of Blair's promise to be tough on asylum seekers, while Ed Miliband underscored this with his 'control immigration' mugs. A platform has been built on which the Tories erected their hostile environment policies. The truth is free movement and migrant labour has benefited the country by sustaining the, admittedly feeble, economic growth of the last decade and providing the social and cultural diversity needed to stay abreast in the modern world.

Nevertheless what transpired from the General Election was that however much Labour tried to refocus on a domestic policy agenda, on the NHS, on nationalisation, on ending austerity and boosting public services the question of Europe and Brexit kept coming up. And Labour's answer was ambiguous: a renegotiated softer Brexit, another referendum with a Remain option and a neutral leader. Johnson's Get Brexit Done cut through as a simple mantra. Yes, more voters supported Remain parties (54% to 46%) but in the wrong places to shift the parliamentary arithmetic.

Labour's shift to a People's Vote was all too little, too late and too ambiguous. Earlier fence-sitting proved disastrous. As **Julie Ward** and **Glyn Ford** argue, highlighting the negatives of Brexit and framing our socialist alternative in Euro-internationalist colours should have happened much earlier with more vigour. Essentially Labour tried to ride two horses and got pulled off both.

Now we are in new territory. Barring a political miracle Brexit will happen on 31<sup>st</sup> January. But Brexit will not be done then. The transition period until the end of 2020 will see fevered negotiations to secure a trade deal and many other arrangements. The symbolic vote by parliament not to seek an extension is fantasy politics. Trade deals take years to negotiate and involve much more than tariffs as **Nick Dearden** explains in a chilling unmasking of the threat to workers' rights, food and environmental standards with privatisation and corporate free-for-alls. With of Trump's 'America first' policy we can be sure he'll be giving no favours to Johnson.

Brexit and the election result also throw up huge questions on the constitution. Northern Ireland is set adrift with a sea border and a floundering devolved Stormont raising the spectre of a united Ireland while Scotland's

overwhelming vote for the SNP pushes a further independence referendum up the agenda. **Mary Southcott** looks

at the inequities in the election result that gave disproportionate numbers of seats to the Tories and puts the case for a broad constitutional convention to look at votes at 16, further local devolution, House of Lords and above all a PR voting system.

**Duncan Bowie** is more critical of Corbyn's leadership and the role of his key advisers, pointing to his unpopularity among the wider electorate, including many traditional Labour supporters and the widely held view that he was unfit to be Prime Minister.

Jeremy Corbyn is standing down and a leadership election process is underway.

Chartist will be examining the merits of various candidates on our website and we urge readers to submit their thoughts to the Labour Together coordinated review of where Labour went wrong. Labour has a huge task to rebuild support. The consequences of this electoral defeat will be severe for British people and the Labour Party.

Elsewhere in this issue **Ricardo Salva** reports on the convulsions engulfing Chile with over 40 days of strikes and protest against a right-wing regime. In Spain **Brian O'Leary** reports on the re-election of Socialist Party under Sanchez, with a smaller majority and assesses prospects for the alliance with the radical Podemos. **Paul Garver** looks at Democrat presidential hopefuls and the battle to unseat Trump.

This is a reactionary Tory government. Don't believe the one-nation hype. The only nation we'll hear a rising drumbeat for is England. But it won't be the best of England—its multiculturalism, social solidarity, creativity and culture. Rather it will be the narrow, nasty, xenophobic, divisive and democracy-threatening nationalism that characterised the Brexit campaign. Be prepared for much more of the same as the Boris Johnson show hits the road and starts to unravel.

## This is a reactionary Tory government. Don't believe the one-nation hype



# Grim up North

**Paul Salveson** on the challenges of rebuilding the red wall

**T**here's very little with which to console ourselves following the General Election. Labour did particularly badly in the North of England, and there was little evidence of the progressive vote switching to the Greens, Lib Dems or civic regionalists like the Yorkshire Party. The results can be put down to a number of factors, Brexit being almost certainly the most significant, closely followed by Corbyn's unpopularity. The correlation between leave-voting Northern constituencies who have traditionally voted Labour which showed marked swings to the Tories, is too obvious to ignore.

In some places, it could be argued that the other progressive parties helped the Tories win. In my neighbouring constituency, Bolton North-East, the Tory had a majority of 337 votes. The Greens picked up a miserly 689 votes and the Lib Dems 1,847. Did they cost the highly respected former shop steward, David Crausby, his seat?

Should the Greens have stood down (as they did in neighbouring marginal Bolton West, in 2017)? They're a legitimate political party with radical and imaginative policies. Labour has done them no favours and stood a candidate against Caroline Lucas in Brighton. The party has been averse to any semblance of pacts or alliances and it could be argued that they got what they deserved. But, to paraphrase Neil Kinnock when he said 'Scargill and Thatcher deserved each other, but the country didn't deserve either' – the rest of us didn't deserve to be saddled with an arrogant Tory Government that can now act with impunity for at least five years, and maybe longer. The very clear message in England, specifically, is that Labour remains the dominant force in progressive politics and that's not likely to change very fast. But we need a different sort of Labour Party from what it has become if it is going to recover lost ground.

By the time this issue of *Chartist* appears, Labour will be in the throes of a leadership campaign which will sap energies but is obviously needed. Politicians like Alan Johnson, many defeated

MPs and indeed Tony Blair, are already calling for a return to 'the centre ground' to win back the Labour heartlands, or rebuild the so-called 'red wall' which has crumbled in the North of England.

I don't think that's the answer. Labour needs to be radical but much more inclusive. Working with other progressive forces isn't just about tactical advantage, it's showing that you're a grown-up political force that shies away from tribalism and sectarianism. Yet both characteristics have plagued Labour these last few years. I'm sick to death of hearing people talk about such-and-such being 'a true Socialist' whilst someone else isn't, as though Socialism is some sort of theological belief and the slightest deviation from the canon risks consigning you to the burning fires of hell.

Alongside a cultural shift within Labour, the party needs to embrace voting reform. The tide has shifted away from traditional binary politics yet the voting system continues to prop up the crumbling edifice. It's reasonable to assume that a proportional voting system would result in a strong Green presence in Parliament. Small civic regionalists such as the Yorkshire Party might be able to make more headway. It could also mean that fringe right-wing parties win some seats – an argument often used by Labour to oppose PR. But that's democracy. You don't oppose the far right by excluding them from the political process.

Many on the pro-Corbyn left will argue that some of Labour's policies were popular, e.g. rail nationalisation. Yet how radical were Labour's proposals? Despite rhetoric about 'new forms of ownership' what seemed to be on the cards was a very traditional post-1945 model of state ownership. Corbyn's populist call for a third off rail fares would have caused chaos on a rail system struggling with already-overcrowded trains. It isn't that wanting fare reductions is wrong – but it needed thinking through in terms of more trains, staff and extra infrastructure. All of which would take years, not a few weeks.

Labour's manifesto was com-



**Blythe Valley** abandons Labour, signalling a trend across the North

pletely silent on many areas of 'democratic' policy. Nothing on PR, nothing about bringing the voting age down and an absence of anything concerning regional devolution, such as making city-region mayors more accountable. Labour under Corbyn seems to accept that the current British political system is the best of all possible worlds. Many would disagree.

Back in 2012 I argued in *Socialism with a Northern Accent* that Labour needs to address issues around English regional identity and build a politics which is inclusive and radical. We don't seem to be any nearer that, with some on the left still pursuing the case for an 'English parliament' that would further marginalise the North. Why not have devolution within Labour and build a semi-autonomous Northern Labour?

The coming year, including the Labour leadership election but not just that, will hopefully see a flowering of radical ideas which Labour can mould into a progressive politics that chimes with the times. It means accepting Brexit and trying to make the best of what may well be a bad job. But let's look for opportunities, not obstacles. It also means being much more collaborative, working constructively with other progressive forces including the burgeoning number of non-party movements, often at a very local level. **C**

**Paul Salveson's  
blog is at  
[www.paulsalveson.org.uk](http://www.paulsalveson.org.uk)**

# Nuclear fantasy

**Dave Toke** says Government plans for a programme of small nuclear power stations is a costly non-starter

**T**he Government is busy pushing 'small modular reactors' (smrs) as one of its key means of boosting jobs in the North. During the election the Government attempted to link a faltering and unlikely 'small modular reactor' (SMR) nuclear programme with target seats in the North. The (so-called) SMR programme seems highly unlikely on financial grounds alone as it would require a massive Government commitment, and on top of that engineering questions undermine the credibility of the programme.

The Government has now issued a press briefing naming Dominic Cummings as favouring the technology as being a means of boosting the North. Like many of Boris Johnson's schemes, this particular promotion has little grounding in reality but is designed to stoke populist fantasies about how the Government can cut through problems and achieve simple solutions.

The UK's SMR programme, such as it is, is neither modular or small or, for that matter, much in existence. The Government are backing plans by Rolls Royce, and have promised an initial £18million, but in reality even to build one prototype plant would require Government to commit to spending over a billion pounds. This is because even if the cost of the

reactor were to turn out close to what Rolls Royce claim (£500 million) it would require an additional several hundred £million for the reactor design to go through the required 'General Design Assessment' (GDA) required of all new reactors (by the Office for Nuclear Regulation). As if this was not enough, I understand that Rolls Royce have demanded, as the price of going through a GDA, a Government commitment to effectively underwrite several reactors requiring a Government commitment to raise several £billion before there is any chance of any power ever being generated.

This financial background alone suggests that this SMR plan is a fantasy that is even less credible than Boris's plans for a Thames Estuary airport or even a bridge between Scotland and Ireland.

However, basic engineering questions also suggest that the SMR plans will go nowhere very slowly. The idea of building what is, in historical terms, a medium sized nuclear power plant (440 MW), defies the logic of nuclear power development since WW2. This has involved building steadily bigger reactors in order to, apart from anything else 'calculate down' (in the words of Mycle Schneider) the costs of nuclear safety measures.

Smaller reactors may (or may not) reduce expensive delays in

construction time, but they are counterbalanced by the lack of economies of scale. Indeed, the size of the proposed Rolls Royce SMR is roughly the size of the UK's first grid connected 'Magnox' reactors. The number and scope of safety measures required for new reactors has increased dramatically since the 1950s (extra containment, redundancy in primary and secondary safety injection systems, back up diesel generator sets etc), so intuitively a smaller reactor does not seem the way to go.

Ordinary engineering rules suggest that costs will not be lower per kW. For example, you still need to make the same number of many of the parts (e.g. reactor pressure vessels) even though the parts may be smaller. Hence savings in cost do not reduce proportionately to size. Rolls Royce plans, whose own projections of cheap generating costs must be treated with a wagon-load of salt, are highly unlikely to go very far, apart from uselessly soaking up a few tens of £millions of Government funds.

We can expect a lot more of this bull and fantasy as time goes on. Yet eventually, like the other great objectives this Government has us believe are going to happen, (rescuing the NHS, delivering a post Brexit boom) people may realise that the rhetorical fantasy is just what it is, fantasy. **C**

**Dr David Toke is  
Reader in Energy  
Politics,  
University of  
Aberdeen**

## Printer ad

## LABOUR DEFEAT

# After the Deluge

**Don Flynn** assesses the Corbyn legacy

**C**orbyn's most important achievement is that he gave a political voice to a generation destined to exist as 21st century capitalism's exploited working class. Considering the need for the political representation of this new proletariat as neoliberal globalisation moves deeper into crisis is the critical next step for the Labour party.

Does the scale of Labour's defeat in the unwanted December general election mean the end of Corbynism? How much of the reduction of the party's share of the vote is down to its four years of dalliance with left wing socialist standpoints which the electorate has shown decisively that it is not prepared to support? What about Corbyn himself? Portrayed in the mainstream media as a London bubble politician, indecisive on key issues and tainted with the charge of antisemitism; was he the reason why so many so-called traditional Labour voters couldn't bring themselves to vote for the party this time?

Getting a sense of the tasks which now have to be taken on by socialists in the party means, in the first instance, understanding what Corbynism was and why the package constructed around the man and his principles were insufficient to get Labour into power this time round.

Corbynism is best understood as a delayed political response to the earthquake that hit globalised capitalism seven years previously. The crisis that exploded in 2008 imposed an all-hands-to-the-pump emergency response to the collapse of banking credit on all the major parties. Support quantitative easing, direct bailouts for the banks and austerity-driven cuts to public services was embraced across the board with Labour scarcely distinguishing itself from the Conservative party's demands for deep cuts to the living standards of the working and lower middle classes.

## Millennials take the biggest hit

Over the immediately following years one section of the population among the worst hit by these measures began to put together a political response which challenged the assumptions behind austerity policies. This was the younger age cohorts which had, in previous



decades, done the most to adapt to the conditions that prevailed in competitive, individualised labour markets. In the jargon of the time, they had invested in themselves by undergoing extensive periods of higher education, taking on the risk of a huge debt overhang in the hope that they would reap the rewards of well-paid, skilled professional employment.

The Great Recession that followed the debt crisis showed what a hollow hope this was for a large proportion of these young people. The jobs market was increasingly configured around the principle of precarity which replaced the vista of well-paid employment with years of unpaid internships for those trying to get into the creative industries, and zero-hour and Uber-style jobs for the rest. Meanwhile asset inflation – a direct consequence of the state support given to sectors which had caused the crisis in the first place – led to soaring house prices which ended the dream of owning a home, or even that of affordable renting.

It was this large group of people who saw sense in the demands being formulated on the left of the Labour party for major structural reform which would give a leading role to democratic political procedures and institutions in shaping a better society. In turning in that direction they came across a small group of leftist politicians who had spent decades on the fringe of the party precisely because of their

principled opposition to the turbo-charged version of global capitalism that had been favoured during the years of the Blairite 'third way'. Corbyn was to the forefront of this small band.

With a party membership now suddenly rising to the half million mark the question was whether this new enthusiasm for left wing politics could translate into success in the electoral arena. Corbyn's centrist and Blairite critics thought 'no way' and the sound of their jaws crashing into the floor was one of the most memorable things that came out of the general election of 2017. Rather than providing them with a disaster which they could demand Corbyn took ownership of they saw voting support for the party rise to a point where it was nearly on a par with that won by the Conservatives. The years of hung Parliament politics opened out as a result.

Depriving Theresa May of the majority she craved seemed like a victory for Corbyn's Labour party that was worth celebrating. In fact, it simply created the conditions that were most inimical to the left continuing its uncomplicated march towards government driven by the anger and frustration of millennials. It was in this hung Parliament that Brexit became the absolute log-jam that prevented serious consideration of the policy measures needed to overcome austerity and begin the restructuring of the economy. It also exposed the divisions in the

**Don Flynn is  
Chartist's  
managing editor**



progressive camp as the debate around leaving the EU pushed people into the extremes of Brexit and Remain.

The team immediately round Corbyn saw the dangers for Labour if it tried to resolve its dilemma by simply coming down on one side or the other. Its initial instinct in seeking to honour the referendum vote by arguing for the softest Brexit possible had to confront the brutal fact that this would mean the alienation of its newly won support from young voters, who largely favoured remain. The long period of attempting to square this circle led to disaffection among pro-Brexit working class voters in Wales, the Midlands and the smaller towns of the North. But even more, the vacillation weakened Labour's appeal among people of more cosmopolitan inclination causing a drift of over a million votes to the Liberal Democrats and Greens.

The conundrum this created for the party's strategists was underscored by the realities of the internal migrations of British citizens over the past forty years which have come about from the deindustrialisation of the Midlands, the North and South Wales. The young and educated were leaving the parts of the country which had been plunged into bleak economic dead ends,

heading for the better prospects of London and the South East. The loss of this segment from community life in the affected areas meant an end to the renewal of working class culture, particularly that part of it that was conducive to resistance and struggle against elites.

The dispute over the UK's membership of the EU suddenly offered people who had lost the habit of digging in and fighting back the chance to at least take sides in an argument that was driven by splits in the ruling class. Rebellion in pursuit of its own interests had ceased to be a part of the daily life of these communities, but at least they could now take on a foot soldier's role in someone else's revolt. The vicarious pleasures to be got from identification with other people's victories, so strongly present in the fanaticism that goes with supporting football teams, was present in the backing given to the Faragist insurgency against Europe.

#### What next?

In retrospect it seems inevitable that Corbynism would come to grief because of its inability to transcend the dilemmas imposed on it by hung Parliament politics. With identity politics mobilised to full screaming pitch, the case for a democratically accountable government to take the leading role in getting sustainable

growth back into the economy, implementing everything required under the terms of the 'Green Deal', bringing the provision of homes back into the realm of public policy, and turning the tide on inequality across British society was drowned out in the noise.

What next? Dismissing the calls by the right wing and centrists in the party who think that a leader with charisma is all that is needed will be the easiest thing to do as the elections for Corbyn's successor get underway. Socialists will need to counter banality of this sort with the demand that post-Corbyn Labour continues to engage with the generation of newly politicised people who are going to spend the next decades of their lives struggling for security in their employment, searching for affordable homes, and trying to raise families in the choking smog of the country's congested cities.

Viewed from this standpoint Corbynism did not fail. Whilst the leap into government office was beyond it at this moment in time, it has forged a bond with the social forces that will grow stronger and more combative in the coming years. The next Labour leader has to be someone with the vision and strategies for building on this achievement. **C**

## A visible reminder

**Apsana Begum** is newly elected Labour MP for the East London constituency of Poplar and Limehouse. She has made history by being the first hijab wearing Bengali woman to be an MP. Here she recounts her first week in the House of Commons:

**I**nduction happened over the weekend (preceding the sitting of the HoC). We were briefed by different departments on parliamentary services, personal security and so on. I got a parliamentary buddy.

Then before I knew it we are in the Chamber and being sworn in. The first week was pretty intense with a lot of information to digest in a short time.

Westminster is a bit like Hogwarts. Easy to get lost in the many corridors.

Then there were the first votes. I voted against the EU Withdrawal Bill. It didn't take long after the Queen's Speech to find pre-election pledges being broken. Quite disheartening.

The new intake MPs were welcomed at the PLP meeting. We need

to do more to create an environment in meetings which are less hostile and where we communicate differences in a more civil way. We had little time for reflection.

Outside the House I joined Socialist Campaign Group and other MPs on an RMT protest against Tory plans to restrict the right to strike.

As a hijab wearing Bengali I noted heads were turned when I was first introduced. MPs on the Tory benches were thumbing through the little Members Directory book, checking 'who's that'. I wore my id lanyard all the time so I didn't get the reaction Dawn Butler had which was a number of Tory MPs thinking she was a cleaner. I got comments, irrelevant questions that you wouldn't be asked in a job interview.



**Apsana Begum was elected with 38,660 votes, a 28,904 majority with 63.1% of the vote**

The diversity of Labour's 202 MPs was in striking contrast to the lack of diversity on the Tory benches. [Labour has 51% women MPs; 20% of its MPs are from BAME backgrounds]. Many of the new MPs are rooted in their local communities having been born and raised there—as I was in Poplar & Limehouse.

So there is a lot to celebrate and be proud of. As a Bengali woman it signals to the Tories that we're just as much in public spaces as in others and we can represent all people. I'm proud to be someone who can be a visible reminder to Boris Johnson that we are here and not going anywhere. Hopefully this gives confidence to others. We'll call out racism and discrimination everywhere, especially in government policies. **C**

## LABOUR FAILURE

# GE 2019 Retrospect and prospects

In anger as well as sadness **Duncan Bowie** reflects on failure and lost opportunities



Using the election was not just a consequence of a failure of Labour strategy over the last few weeks but the perhaps inevitable consequence of an inability to face up to the reality of the political context in which we found ourselves and to present a convincing political position. We failed to convince the electorate that we could be a party of government. We failed to demonstrate that Labour actually had the answers to the questions the electorate was asking – and the key question was from those who had suffered most from a decade of austerity, could we actually improve their quality of life. The fact that it was in those constituencies that the electorate were most disadvantaged, that the swing away from Labour was greatest is an indelible stain on the record of our party and movement. The fact that people who had suffered most from a decade of austerity, and a longer period of abandonment by ‘Westminster’ politicians, actually still had most to lose, had more confidence in a Conservative government led by a right-wing upper-class charlatan shows the depth of our failure. Let us be clear. The Labour Party’s failure has betrayed the next generation as well as the current generation.

Those of us in London and the wider South East need to recognise

how London centric the Labour Party has become and it is the membership not just the MPs and National Executive who need to widen their perspective. The party may have the largest ever membership, but this does not mean we are any more representative of the wider electorate, as is demonstrated by the fact that this is the worst result for Labour since 1935 in terms of seats won. While many London constituencies might be able to send out hundreds of activists to canvass and leaflet, in many of the so-called safe Labour seats elsewhere, candidates were struggling to find activists to get out on the streets. Labour does not deserve votes where it has been inactive and has no local basis.

BREXIT of course gets much of the blame. Given the divisions within the electorate as well as within the Parliamentary Labour Party and wider party membership, it was difficult for the Party to develop and maintain an approach which avoided further divisions. Labour’s failure to adopt a consistent and united position, did us major damage. The position of ‘constructive ambivalence’ or ‘sitting on the fence’, while calling for a second referendum and arguing that Labour could somehow negotiate a better deal with the EU, which we would then neither advocate or oppose, was just not credible.

Labour may have hoped the BREXIT party would split the Leave vote, but in practice much of the Leave vote in Labour ‘strongholds’ went to the Conservatives, while in London and the wider South East some Remain votes went to the LibDems and the Greens – though not as many as we had feared as the LibDem ‘Revoke article 50’ position was seen as undemocratic and as the ‘remain alliance’ with the Greens and Plaid Cymru proved largely ineffective.

Labour however should have spent the last three years not contemplating its position on BREXIT but dealing with the causes of BREXIT – the growing inequality between London and the wider South East and the Northern and Midlands regions. We did not understand how fed up people were with what they saw as London centric elitist politics which had forgotten them. The rhetoric of blaming the Conservatives for austerity was not enough. The fact that so many people believed that the Tories could ‘make Britain great again’ and that Johnson was a ‘One-nation Conservative’ in the Disraelian tradition, who understood the ‘condition of England’ question, and that Labour could not and did not, represents a change in the political dynamic of the country which may be irreversible. Labour can no longer claim to be the party of the

**Duncan Bowie is  
Chartist Reviews  
Editor**

working class.

This returns us to the issue of the state of the Labour Party and the failure of leadership. I supported Corbyn's nomination for the party leadership because I wanted Labour Party policies to shift to the left. I had hoped that a more democratic party would lead to a leadership closer to the membership and to a more collaborative way of working at all levels within the party. I was wrong. We have had increased factionalism within the party to the extent that the electorate as a whole sees us as fighting among ourselves rather than fighting for them. We have had far too little discussion of policy options (how the manifesto, which was actually far better than I expected, was written remains a mystery) and too much focus on personalities and internal power struggles. The cliquism and nepotism around the Corbyn leadership is unforgivable and resulted us in marginalising good left politicians because they happen to disagree with Corbyn or have fallen out with one of his acolytes. I do not doubt Corbyn is a very principled individual. Unfortunately, he remains a protest politician – he has after all never had to run anything (other than the Labour Party) and conse-

quently taking difficult decisions and responsibility for them has been somewhat of a new experience. His past associations have left him open to criticism, much of it grossly unfair. Criticising the Israeli state does not make him an anti-Semite, but the impression that he is weak on controlling the behaviour of his historical associates, to whom he feels an obligation of loyalty, however much they discredit his and the Labour Party's position has done untold damage, and he has to take some of the responsibility for this.

The antipathy to Corbyn was however not just related to this issue – he was widely seen as someone really who did not have much of a clue about the lives and aspirations of working-class people. Given his relatively humble lifestyle this may seem unjust. The fact that the party leader was more unpopular than the party as a whole is an appalling basis for an election campaign, and Corbyn would have given his greatest service to the party if he had stood down some months ago, so we could have selected a leader who was a positive rather than negative factor – by the time the election was called it was far too late.

The notion of 'Corbynism' and the

division of the party into 'Corbynistas' and those critical of/opposed to 'Corbynism', had negative consequences. The socialist case cannot be linked to a single individual, whether it be Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Chavez or Corbyn (or for that matter any potential new leader). We must move to a more collectivist leadership, using a range of experience and talents which we have within the Parliamentary Labour Party. If the left is to make a more positive contribution, and I include Momentum in that designation, let us focus on developing policies which are both socialist and potentially popular, and spend a bit more time promoting them to the wider electorate, and a bit less energy on internal powers struggles, faction fights, compiling slates and slagging off and slandering fellow party members. You cannot blame the media, when you supply the media with its ammunition.

Hopefully Chartist will help to contribute to an improved culture within the party and the wider movement and desist from seeking to attach the future of the British socialist movement to the promotion to leadership of one or two specific individuals. Leadership is important to the future, but so are we all. **c**

# Labour falters in Wales

**Peter Rowlands** on Tory gains in north and holds for Labour in south

**T**he election result in Wales was similar, if slightly worse for Labour, than the election in the UK. In Wales Labour lost 8% of its previous vote share and six seats out of 28, all to the Tories. However, there was a clear contrast between north and south. In the south seats thought to be vulnerable like Gower, Cardiff North and Newport West were retained, with the loss of only Bridgend. All except one of a group of five Labour held seats in the north-east, fell to the Tories. These seats were in many ways typical of the seats that fell to the Tories in the North and Midlands of Britain. The Tories also took Ynys Mon (Anglesey), a strange three way marginal.

It is possible that the result in part reflected problems with the local health board, which had been in special measures for some time, and blamed on the Welsh Labour Government.

In the south most of the seats in

the old coal valleys were, like those in the north, post industrial, more depressed than the north and strongly Leave voting, but although both the Tory and the Brexit Party vote increased substantially in all these seats the strength of the Labour vote was much stronger here than in the north-east, preventing a Tory break-through. Although the combined Tory and Brexit Party vote was greater than the Labour vote in Torfaen, as it was in the two Newport seats and Alyn and Deeside, the only Labour seat in the north that the Tories didn't take.

It was a bad election for Plaid Cymru also, despite mounting interest in Welsh independence. They retained the four seats that they held, but their vote share dropped by about 5%, and they should have taken Ynys Mon, which they hold for the Assembly.

The LibDems didn't do as well as in England, as Wales was more tilted to Leave, and they lost their only seat, Brecon and Radnor, which

they had regained in a by-election only three months before.

The next big electoral test in Wales is the election for the Welsh Government in May 2021. The Tories will be looking to take those seats they have recently captured, while Labour and Plaid will obviously fight to at least retain what they have, if not better it. Hopefully the Brexit Party will disappear from the Assembly, where they have been a complete shambles.

Labour must obviously seek to reconnect with the large numbers that deserted it in the Leave voting areas, as it must in England.

The future is uncertain. A key problem will be the replacement, if that is to happen, of the large amounts of EU aid that Wales receives, which the Tories might not see fit to replicate. And without a favourable trade deal the Welsh economy, because of its higher volume of trade with the EU than the UK as a whole, is particularly vulnerable. It's likely to be a bumpy ride. **c**

**Peter Rowlands**  
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## BREXIT

# BREXIT after Johnson's victory

**Glyn Ford** says Johnson will be torn between machismo and pragmatism over Brexit

**D**ecember 12th delivered a solid majority for Johnson and the Conservative Party. All 632 Tory candidates were required to sign a pledge to back Johnson's Brexit Deal in the House of Commons by voting for the Withdrawal Agreement if elected. The process is already underway and will be concluded well in time for the United Kingdom to leave the EU on January 31st. Despite the 54-46 vote for Remain over Leave Parties there is no question of the House of Lords blocking the passage of the Bill with 'Getting Brexit Done' virtually the entirety of Johnson's election campaign. Remain and a Second Referendum were always deliquescent demands. The future for the internationalist left will be REFORM, REVOLT, REJOIN.

Once we leave there will then be a 'transition' period until 31st December 2020 when the UK is outside the EU and its Institutions but remains tied to EU law and regulation. This period, now dramatically shrunk by May and Johnson's earlier Brexit travails and the consequent delays, was designed to provide the space for the EU & UK to negotiate a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). This is now an impossible calendar unless the Tories settle for a minimal 'dirty' deal limited to goods plus freedom of movement for business, leaving services to be tidied up later. The decision not to seek any further extension from Brussels means chronology strangling content and resuscitates the prospect, at worst, of a 'No Deal' Brexit and, at best, the most brutal Brexit with all the consequences that follow.

We have to hope Johnson continues to be duplicitous and treacherous. For the only way out is to do an interim deal - rather than transitional deal - for services, particularly financial services, that maintains the status quo while the base FTA is filled out for additional agreements.

The timing will be tight event for a 'dirty' deal and all the more so as the UK seeks to sharply diverge from current regulatory alignment with the EU as Britain seeks to model tax, economy and labour market with Singapore not

Sweden. In Brussels the negotiations - to the great disappointment of Phil Hogan the Irish Commissioner responsible for Internal Trade - will be led by Michael Barnier reporting directly to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. He will strike a hard bargain. Von der Leyen hopes the European Council will give her a flexible negotiating mandate. She may be disappointed. If the UK wants to re-open long closed chapters so may countries like Poland and the rest. There is a real prospect that the two sides may not be able to make and ratify any Agreement and what is absolutely clear is this won't happen in the mixed competence areas around investment and transport which require not only ratification by qualified majority in the Council and by the European Parliament (EP), but unanimity in Council and also by the EP and the 27 Member States National Parliaments plus in some cases Regional Parliaments. This ratification process in itself in the past has taken up to five years to complete.

Johnson will be torn between machismo and pragmatism. The golden vistas of an FTA with the USA beckon. From 1st February the UK will be free to enter into negotiations with potential trade partners, but few - and especially Washington - will signal the dotted line until the UK's future trade relationship with the EU is clear. An ideological Johnson will close early negotiations with the EU to reap the supposed rewards of Washington and their chlorinated chicken. All will prove more gruelling than anticipated. Japan, Canada and Korea, who already have FTAs with the EU, will not be offering their current terms to London. They will be looking for deals leaning more in their favour as they lose the economies of scale of dealing with the EU. The situation is not helped by the fact that Whitehall will be struggling with capacity problems with scarce officials capable of trade negotiations after more than forty years of the UK having no competence in trade matters.

Johnson's majority gives him the full five years, save for some extraordinary event. However the promise is hidden in plain sight



**Johnson - torn between machismo and pragmatism**

with the anticipation of the beginning of the end of the English Empire with the break-up of the UK. On December 12th the Tory writ ran neither in Scotland nor Northern Ireland. The Independence Referendum in Scotland in 2014 was intended to be a once in a generation event, but that logic is demolished by Brexit. One key argument used to hold back the late swell of support for independence was that a 'yes' vote would leave Scotland marooned outside the EU. Now Brexit sees Scotland, that voted overwhelmingly remain, dragged out of the European Union against its will. The fact that the SNP won 48 out of 59 seats in Scotland provides an unanswerable mandate for a second Referendum, and impossible to deny if revalidated in the 2021 Scottish Assembly elections.

On the island of Ireland the 1998 'Good Friday Agreement' provided for, in appropriate circumstances, a Referendum on Irish Unification. Johnson's EU Deal chooses to draw a regulatory and customs border down the middle of the Irish Sea rather than between the Republic of Ireland and the North. This creates an economic union that alongside the social changes in the south makes an inexorable logic of future political union. The triggering made all the more predictable when for the first time ever the Nationalist Parties just outpolled the Unionists in the North. **C**

**Glyn Ford was a Labour MEP for over 20 years**

# After darkness, light

**Tom Miller** reflects on the reasons for defeat and identifies seeds for renewal

**I**t is difficult to imagine more painful circumstances in which to be writing. Labour under a socialist leadership has suffered a defeat so fundamental that even many areas which are core to our Party's sense of self are lost to us. Boris Johnson has secured a hegemony for a substantial bloc of nationalist voters, ranging from right to left on the economy, who had previously voted for Labour, the Tories, and UKIP. It may endure for a decade.

Labour has been unable to rally a rival alliance around a social-democratic internationalism, trapped by party rivalries, a hostile media, a fragmenting electoral system, internal strife, and declining historic base. Left struggling with these obstacles, our leadership team has looked out of touch, poorly managed and organised, ignorant or hostile to outside critics, and supportive of bureaucratic centralism inside the party. The 2019 election is a coffin with a hundred nails.

Despite popular policies, we proven ourselves to be fundamentally not up to the task of keeping existing support, winning new people over, or introducing a real strategy for either.

It is true that the Party's Brexit position has cost it much support with 'Labour leave' voters. But we also lost more 'Labour remainers' to the Lib Dems and Greens than the Labour/Tory gap in many of these seats. We lost a large number of seats to the remain-friendly SNP.

It now matters little, but the fact is that there was never an adequate Brexit position for Labour to take, and it was always at a disadvantage following the seamless alliance between the Brexit Party and the Tories.

Labour's Brexit position developed so slowly that it left us mere weeks to persuade people of the policy we settled on. It represented a concession to the People's Vote campaign which would have never come about if Labour had worked earlier to counter Theresa May's framing of what Brexit meant, and had instead advocated early for a model like Norway+. A commitment to fighting (often Corbynite) activists on conference



**Antonio Gramsci - "The old is dying, but the new cannot be born"**

floor, dithering and splitting in media appearances once it was done, only added to this.

We can change what brought us here.

These failures a symptom of the deeper cause for Labour's defeat, which is that it is far too slow to listen and change, and far too quick to applaud itself for wherever it currently is.

The years that have followed Corbyn's election to office have been marked by central control of campaigns and policy. A single loyalist slate dominates the NEC, all of our policy making structures, and has been free to select candidates itself and impose them over the will of local parties. A structure of social media outriders and trench mentality rhetoric in local parties both invoke the leadership to stifle debate and diversity.

Since the election, those who benefit by preserving this setup have tried to exclusively blame Labour's Brexit position for losing. This does nothing to interrogate the statistics or to explain the scale of the defeat. It is undeniable that low public trust in the leadership overall, some of Jeremy's past, anti-Semitism, the large volume of policies requiring big spends and our image as a party filled with sectarians all played a role.

Both Brexit and discontent

with Corbyn pose the same question: when stuck, why couldn't we adapt?

Perhaps the most over-used quotation in politics is from Antonio Gramsci, namely that "The old is dying, but the new cannot be born". But our job is precisely to make sure that the new is born; as such, we need to make maximum use of the opportunity in defeat. We cannot simply repeat the experience – we must make deep reaching changes.

We hold a unique opportunity to preserve Corbynism's best aspects (democracy, popular and transformative policy), and cast aside the contradictory urges that hold the left back (top-down sectarianism, unwillingness to listen or adapt, refusal to put strategy first).

By embracing a more open and flexible model of politics, Corbynism has the chance to evolve into a broader left, capable of being more responsive to criticism, promoting party unity, and generating much wider appeal. This requires both the defensive trench mentality held on part of the Momentum left and the prospect of a return to liberal centrism to be decisively rejected, and quickly. Now is the time for open minds, open political culture, and the return of socialists to a politics of hope. **C**

**Tom Miller is co-chair Open Labour and a Brent councillor**



# Hunger strike against global inaction

Climate emergency hunger striker **Peter Cole** explains why he and others took dramatic action in the UK and worldwide

On 18th November Extinction Rebellion (XR), a peaceful civil disobedience movement, began a one week Global Climate Hunger Strike (GCHS) to highlight the world's governments inaction on the Climate and Ecological Emergency (CEE) and to demand climate justice. It linked current food shortages in the global south with food vulnerability everywhere through the slogan "No Food, No Future", with 820 million hungry and billions threatened with starvation unless we Act Now. Hunger Strikers chose to forgo their privileged access to food to highlight our shared food vulnerability and to pressure governments to act.

Those contemplating striking consulted their doctor. More than 520 people participated worldwide, more than 260 in the UK. They took water and some vitamin and mineral supplements (e.g. vitamin B1, potassium, magnesium and phosphate). The GCHS was flexible, with people able to join for 24 hours or the full week, or do 'rolling hunger strikes' with 24 hours or more of fasting interspersed with eating.

Some strikers chose to prolong their strike in the USA (2), Palestine (1), Australia (1), Ghana (1) and UK (5). In the UK this coincided with the General Election, so hunger strikers sat in front of the main political party headquarters (HQs) seeking to secure their leaders' support for a CEE Bill to be adopted in Parliament. The Green party, Plaid Cymru, Labour and Liberal Democrats engaged to varying degrees but the Brexit and Conservative parties failed to do so. Hunger strikers were ejected from the latter two HQs on attempting to deliver invitations to discussions. Seven invitations were issued to Conservative Party leader and Prime Minister Boris Johnson - in vain.

Extinction Rebellion is 'beyond politics' but sought the support of all MP candidates for the Bill, with 220 pledging their support (15 now elected MPs). The Bill has three demands: for the government to Tell the Truth about CEE to the public through the media; for the government to Act Now, committing to halting nature loss and carbon



**Peter Cole (left) Extinction Rebellion hunger protest**

emissions by 2025; and for a Citizens Assembly to determine the policies to achieve this, based on a deliberative consideration of the science.

Non-engagement of the Conservative party and their manifesto seeking carbon neutrality by 2050 means mass death as science shows. It is akin to calling the fire brigade in 30 years' time when one's house is now on fire. Marko Stepanov said "A green revolution will change the economic and social landscape. These people behind us (sic Conservative party) are afraid of losing their vested interests, their privileges and their entitlements."

Three UK hunger strikers (Julian May, Marko Stepanov and Peter Cole) completed 26 days feeling no hunger after three days. Slow thought and speech, progressive weakness and weight loss in the region of 10 to 15 Kg ensued and cold, wind and rain took their toll but morale was boosted by XR supporters. Blood tests monitored electrolytes, kidney and liver function. Infection during, and re-feeding at the conclusion of the strike are the greatest dangers to life - mortality of World War 2 concentration camp prisoners increased when liberated and given free food. Re-feeding is gradual over 3-4 weeks.

Motives for adopting a hunger strike varied but we unite in our alarm at the threat of climate

change to the world's children. "I am a rebel so that I can look my grandchildren in the eye", stressed this author. The UN reports 1000 children die daily (mainly in the global south) from climate change, this figure increasing as feed-back loops accelerate emissions to a tipping point when irreversibility results in the 6th Mass extinction.

Extinction Rebellion Tells the Truth of social as well as climate science, using mobilisation through actions which are disruptive, non-violent, respectful, having an element of self-sacrifice. It has inconvenienced the public to draw media attention to the CEE and build a mass movement but there must always be a balance between causing disruption and building popular support. Hunger striking inconveniences ourselves rather than the public, is socially and psychologically rather than economically disruptive, and can help mobilise 'people power' against inaction of the government.

Parliament declared a CEE on 1st May 2019 but failed to act within six months. The CEE Bill is a response to this. We urge everyone in the UK to lobby their MP until sufficient cross party support for the Bill enables it to become law. If there is insufficient progress on the Bill by Spring 2020 disruptive rebellion will occur, including GCHS. **C**

**Peter Cole is a 76 year old emeritus professor of respiratory medicine at Imperial College, London. He was active in the south of the USA during the Civil Rights marches of 1963/4**



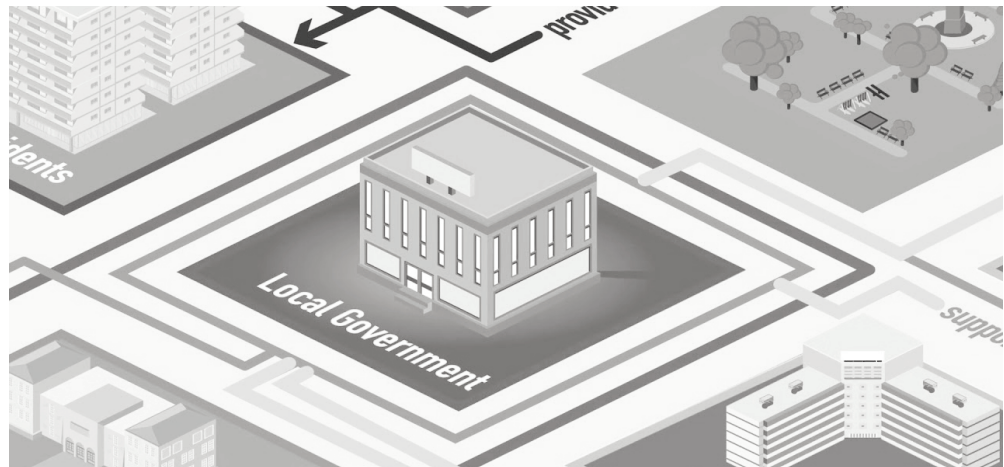
# Johnson's economic populism

**Bryn Jones** finds the Tories adaptation to state intervention is an opportunity for a Labour counter offensive

Following the Tories' sweeping gains in Labour's northern and midlands heartlands, Boris Johnson's pledges to these 'left-behind' areas has become a major post-election focus. One that is also crucial to reverse Labour's electoral fortunes. For it represents a major test of the new Tory paradigm. Put simplistically, this is akin to the challenge dogging Donald Trump's similar form of economic populism: how to maintain a free-market neoliberal framework whilst simultaneously using state intervention and fiscal levers to raise incomes and standards for the economically – usually working class – disadvantaged.

Many believe that Trump repaid political debts to his finance capital backers by reinforcing the neoliberal dimension with tax cuts and deregulation (e.g. in health care) at the expense of measures that could reduce working class deprivation. Trump's popularity partially endures because tax cuts have boosted general economic activity, for a while, and protectionist and anti-immigrant policies play well to many working class voters. With the UK as a supplicant in post-Brexit prospective trade talks with the USA, EU and others, such clout and tactics are not at Johnson's disposal.

Some modest income tax relief did feature in Tory manifesto promises. However, it also promised to reverse a planned cut in corporation tax and to boost public spending on health and education services. Although these sums are relatively small they still need to be funded. Johnson's post-election tour of his new, northern client constituencies re-iterated Manifesto pledges for a 'Northern Powerhouse Rail' between Leeds and Manchester, followed by Newcastle, Tees Valley, Hull, Sheffield and Liverpool links. It also promised a 'new deal for towns', rebranding and slightly expanding the previously introduced £3.6bn Towns Fund to: regenerate towns, 'produce thriving high streets, give young people a future . . . safer streets, safer towns, new civic infrastructure, community ownership and community spirit.' Utopia awaits. Unfortunately it seems likely that this fund will



The Preston Model that has grown and revitalised that area's economy

actually be country-wide, rather than focussed solely on blighted ex-Labour constituencies.

Such capital may generate some jobs but it will do little to raise the abysmally low wage rates in these areas, where routine services, call centres and distribution depots are typical sources of employment. Conservative pledges promised to raise the national living wage - based on a two-thirds proportion of median wages - from £8.21 to £10.50 per hour for those aged over 21; theoretically putting another 90 odd pounds a week in full-time workers' pockets and purses. But there are catches. Many low paid workers, especially women, are in part-time jobs with proportionately lower weekly earnings. Moreover the timetable for the higher rate stretches over five years; which would mean average, annual rises of only 47 p per hour, or £18.80 per week for full-time workers. There is no mention of inflation-proofing these rises and, as the TUC comments, if Brexit cost inflation hits the economy, the median rate for all workers will fall. In turn this will reduce the rate of the living wage. Without the regularisation of gig economy work that Labour promised, many employers may also transfer workers into self-employment, to evade wage regulation.

Johnson's strategists see their conquered Labour strongholds in the North and Midlands as potentially permanent pillars of Tory rule. Yet this focus offers Labour considerable scope for a counter-

offensive. If and when the planned capital investment could take years to regenerate run-down areas while the bidding for 'new towns' funding could trigger new political rifts and conflicts. Labour needs to have alternative policies to promote through aggressive campaigns rooted in social movements and local communities.

One such counter-strategy could utilise the successful Preston Model that has grown and revitalised that area's economy by focussing large anchor institutions' spending on goods and services from local suppliers. If, as often follows a general election, the party in government loses control of councils in subsequent local elections, Labour's national party organisation needs to be ready with beefed-up versions of the Preston model, and similar policies, to expose the feebleness of Tory measures for run-down northern and midlands towns.

Tory attempts to ride the two horses of neoliberal free trade and publicly funded, infrastructure development are highly likely to come unstuck. Their 'escape' from the EU into the sunny uplands of deregulated international free trade, is essentially an attempt to breathe new life into neoliberal globalism. However, inherent socio-economic contradictions in this combination of economic populism and neoliberalism may undermine attempts to build a solid electoral base in ex-industrial Labour heartlands. They could instead provide sources for a more credible Labour alternative. **C**

**Bryn Jones is a political sociologist and officer of Bath CLP**

## TRADE DEALS

# Free market nightmare

**Nick Dearden** on the danger of Johnson dancing to Trump's tune on trade

**B**oris Johnson is in office and moving with great speed to embark on a number of post Brexit trade deals, deals which could fundamentally and irreversibly shift of the balance of power and wealth in favour of capital.

An 'independent' trade policy has always been at the heart of Tory Eurosceptic vision of Brexit. Partly this comes from their imperial fantasies, in which Britannia will once again use her control of the seas to impose free trade on the rest of the world. But there's a hard reality to their trade obsession too – trade deals today are mammoth agreements which can effect massive changes across an economy with no parliamentary accountability and the force of international law to hold them in place. As such they are a key mechanism for deregulation, liberalisation and corporate rule.

Johnson's prize is a US deal, of course. This suits Donald Trump down to the ground – he's spent the last three years using trade policy to undermine the economies of the US's main competitors – the EU and China. As leaks from the US trade talks have shown, US negotiators are desperate for the hardest possible Brexit, moving Britain away from EU standards and protections both as a way of increasing the penetration of US capital in the British economy, and weakening the EU economy as a whole. The changes which Johnson has already made to the EU Withdrawal Act are dancing to Trump's tune.

So what does the US want from a trade deal with Britain? First it wants regulatory changes. At the moment, industrially produced US agriculture is often blocked from EU markets because of the quantities of antibiotics, steroids, hormones and chlorine used. The US is demanding these prohibitions are removed. This wouldn't necessarily change British standards, but it would mean these US goods appearing on our super-market shelves.

This is how modern trade deals put downward pressure on standards and protections across the board. In case you think, 'well, it's up to the consumer what they eat', remember that the US is pushing



**Big US Pharma**

hard to reduce labelling standards under a trade deal. And perhaps more importantly, British farmer's ability to compete against this industrial scale agriculture depends on us too adopting lower standards and 'getting big or getting out'.

Second is services. Trade deals are increasingly about 'trade in services' and ensuring that sector is as liberalised as possible. This includes everything from energy services to financial services to telecommunications, insurance, and much of what we'd regard as 'public services'. Once liberalised, it's a one-way street – trade deals have 'standstill' clauses to ensure countries cannot 'un-liberalise' services and 'ratchet' clauses to ensure that any policy change goes in the direction of more liberalisation.

So taking public control of energy, telecommunications, broadband, contracted out bits of the NHS, are all extremely difficult under these clauses. True, you can opt out services from these liberalising disciplines, but it's not as easy as it sounds. You can't opt out services that don't yet exist (think NHS online services), and it relies on having a government that actually wants to exclude certain services from trade deals.

Related to this is intellectual property provisions, which also

get higher and more stringent under trade deals. Trump calls us 'freeloaders' off US drug research because we don't simply allow the market to dictate what the NHS should pay for new medicines. In trade deals, he's trying to force countries to remove the ability to regulate medicine prices, potentially raising medicine costs to the NHS astronomically. And this is not all one way – Johnson's government will attempt to do very similar things in trade deals with developing countries, potentially threatening access to medicines for millions of people across the world.

A new innovation in trade deals is the so-called 'e-commerce' agenda. This is really about setting new global rules governing digital trade. Sadly, the current push – for US and British governments – is setting those rules in the interest of the Big Tech industry. This makes it much more difficult for governments to hold Big Tech companies to account – it makes it more difficult from them to control where Big Tech can hold your data, impossible for them to scrutinise source code and algorithms, and harder for them to tax and regulate Big Tech giants. US negotiators have told us that a digital services tax would be impossible under a US trade deal. Doubtless public broadband would be too. Trade Secretary Liz Truss won't

**Nick Dearden is  
Director of Global  
Justice Now**



mind – she’s already said we are “a nation of Airbnb-ing, Deliveroo-eating, Uber-riding freedom fighters”.

Finally, modern trade deals often include a parallel legal system only open to foreign-based big business. This ‘corporate court’ system allows corporations to sue Britain for doing almost anything they don’t like – environmental protection, regulating finance, renationalising public services, anti-smoking policies – you name it. These things already exist in numerous international deals and have seen tobacco giants suing countries for putting cigarettes in plain packaging, water companies suing when governments raise the minimum wage, and, recently, an energy company suing when a government promised to phase out coal use.

While such tribunals exist already, they don’t currently exist between the US and European Union. The potential for thousands of the biggest corporations in the world to sue the British government for practically anything they don’t like is a chilling prospect indeed.

Trade deals today aren’t just massive. They’re also incredibly secretive. In the EU we spent many years fighting for a relatively open and democratic trade negotiating process. In Britain, we haven’t even started to have that fight. That means that as things stand, MPs have no right to see a government’s negotiating objectives, no right to see the negotiating papers and an ability to stop a trade deal that they don’t like. Trade deals will be negotiated under royal prerogative. While Theresa May relented to parliamentary pressure and promised some accountability to MPs in negotiating an EU-UK deal, Boris Johnson has removed those commitments.

So our ability to stop these deals will be won or lost by campaigns, in the media, and on the streets. It is possible. Trade deals have been defeated by campaigning before – most recently the US-EU deal TTIP. But we need to make crystal clear what these deals mean – both for us and for others, as we will discover when Johnson starts negotiating in earnest with African, Asian and Latin American countries. Trade is not primarily about eating more interesting foods from far-flung corners of the world. Deals like the US-UK deal is about handing vast swathes of our society over to big business. We can and must stop it. **C**

# Regroup and learn the lessons

## Sam Tarry MP on threats and challenges facing the Labour movement

**T**he week after the election was an incredibly proud and humbling one for me as I began my work as the Member of Parliament for Ilford South.

Not every Member has the opportunity to represent the constituency they grew up in, had their first job in, went to school in, and first got involved in politics in – I’m determined to repay the trust the electorate has put in me, because it’s my community, my friends, and the people that I’ve grown up with that I’m now representing.

But that elation and pride has been severely tempered by the sadness I felt for many friends and comrades who either lost their seats or fell far short of being elected to Parliament. Their energy and ideas will be a huge loss for our Party, but I’m confident they’ll continue the fight in every corner of our country.

The General Election result was catastrophic for the Labour movement, and a devastating outcome for millions of people, a vast proportion of whom will now be facing a further five years of deteriorating living standards, whilst our welfare state and public services are further dismantled.

The already downtrodden and hardest up will continue to bear the brunt of ideologically-driven austerity cuts that have slashed billions from the public sector budget, held back private sector investment and R&D, failed to create well paid and long term jobs on a serious scale, whilst this new Government will likely further demonise refugees and migrants – in particular the Muslim community, and move quickly to extend the privatisation of our National Health Service, dismantle rights at work and to continue to cut taxes for the super rich and large corporations. Neo-liberalism will be unshackled, and driven deeper into our economy and culture.

With an unstoppable majority they’ll attempt to rewrite the rules. I expect to see attacks on democracy itself under the guise



Sam Tarry with London mayor Sadiq Khan on campaign trail

of reforming the BBC, boundary changes, ID checks on voters known to suppress working class communities and even rumoured plans to re-examine the Supreme Court. Make no mistake – they have a plan to re-shape Britain that is every bit as radical as that which Labour put forward from a progressive point of view.

What’s clear in my first few days in office is how aggressively this Tory government plans to cut, privatise and roll back even more of the gains made by previous Labour governments. Whether it be reneging on commitments to EU rights standards, underinvestment in the NHS, the outlawing of strikes, or the failure to deliver on many of its promises, such as the planned increase in the national living wage. This Tory government will not stop with its ideological brutality. Many on their benches see this as their opportunity to reignite the fires of Thatcherism for the 21st century.

They won’t be unopposed though. Despite being reduced in number, we must now regroup and learn the lessons of why we lost the General Election, being truly honest and leaving no stone unturned as we plan to regain power and rebuild our movement. In Parliament we will challenge and scrutinise the callous legislation the Government has set out in the Queen’s Speech. We will always argue the case for a better alternative for every citizen in this country. **C**

**Sam Tarry is newly-elected Labour MP for Ilford South**



## CHILE

## UPRISING IN CHILE

**Ricardo Salva** says the recent turmoil in Chile heralds the beginning of a potential revolutionary transformation

**T**he political, economic and social system in Chile is in crisis. An historic and concurrent crisis of the post-Pinochet economic and social 'stability' era, and a crisis of representation by the current political parties in Government and by the leadership of the 'opposition' parties, is taking place.

In a country where there is a deep political mistrust of the institutions, opportunities and spaces have arisen where new formations within the labour movement and social organisations are becoming instruments for the protesters' demands. Under the banners of "Chile has woken up" and for a "Free and Sovereign Constituent Assembly", Chile has become engulfed in mass rallies, hundreds of public protests and events, citizen assemblies ('Cabildos', usually held in public places) for more than 40 consecutive days. Protesters have faced heavy-handed police and military intervention backed by new and draconian anti protest-legislation.

As 2019 ended Chileans are counting the cost of weeks of mass protests and once the street barricades have been removed, many protesters will be asking themselves where their central demand for a Sovereign Constituent Assembly has gone? The ruling right-wing governing alliance and the opposition political forces offered a compromise, a 12-point "Agreement for Social Peace and a New Constitution". This new agreement was made with the aim of calming popular indignation and restoring public order in a clear attempt to escape political accountability.

From mid-October, provoked by an increase in metro fares, the streets of Santiago have been alight with student protest, the most important social explosion that has happened in Chile since the end of the military dictatorship. A violent police response, in which nearly 30 people were killed, thousands wounded and detained, inflamed popular indignation, and the demonstrations swelled into a revolutionary revolt against social inequality, the rising cost of living, and a call for the establishment of a Constituent Assembly.

Tear gas, mass arrests and water Cannons, also known as 'Guanacos', shooting people at head level with hundreds blinded, have evoked painful memories. The crackdown has reminded people of the time when on the 11 September 1973, the former socialist president, Salvador Allende was overthrown by armed forces under the command of General Augusto Pinochet. The US-backed coup led to political repression, during which the army executed or 'disappeared' thousands of political opponents. Now, in spite of the clampdown, daily marches, women dancing in unison in the streets, to the song of "A Rapist Is In Your Way", street barricades, citizen assemblies and other actions are continuing.

#### Background to mass protests

Social unrest across the region had been simmering for years. It is tempting to search for a common reference, for regions or places with a different character and context. As result of the international financial crisis of 2007/8, the world economy has entered a stage of financial and commercial clashes not seen since the Second World War.

At the same time popular uprising in Bolivia was growing. On 11th November 2019, Evo Morales, Bolivia's populist president for almost 14 years, was deposed. Social and political unrest had been stirring elsewhere, apart from Venezuela, in Ecuador, Peru, Brazil and Central America. Chile's unrest has spread to Colombia as well. According to the online Financial Times (04.12.19) "Unlike the Russian and Asian crisis that engulfed the emerging world in the 1990s, contagion this time is not primarily a financial market phenomenon". The article ironically concluded that this is due to the fact that "populations are much more aware than in the past".

In Chile the current political unrest started in October 2019. However, as far back as 2006, secondary school students revolted against the cost of education in a movement which became known as "The Revolution of the Penguins", a reference to the colours of their school uniform. Since then, other social movements have joined them, such as the movement against the privatised pension scheme,

No+AFP in 2011, the women's movement, NI UNA MENOS and the resistance by the Mapuche people against discrimination.

A mass movement that started in October in Santiago has been transformed into a revolutionary movement not seen since the Pinochet years. More and more protesters have become organised. More than 50 workers' and social organisations, including the Chilean TUC, were united in calling for a General Strike in September with more than 200 organisations participating. Alameda Avenue and Plaza Italia, renamed "Plaza Dignidad" by the protesters, rang with the cries of "Chile has woken up", "Piñera Renuncia" and calls for the establishment of a Constituent Assembly.

Much of the indignation can be traced back to Chile's role as the original testing ground of authoritarian neoliberalism where a free-market economy was protected from democratic and workers' demands. This resulted in one of the most far-reaching privatisation programmes known and one which was also enshrined and legitimised in an undemocratic constitution. Following the transition to Democracy, after 1990, this neoliberal model was left largely untouched. The 'Concertación' coalition governments of the 1990s and 2000s not only maintained Pinochet's Constitution, but also deepened the privatisation initiatives. As a result, most of the public goods and services are now provided by private companies or public-private initiatives, making them unaffordable for the mass of the population.

#### Response to the uprising

The demand for a Constituent Assembly has been an important collective goal together with demands related to wages, health, education and pensions. Initially the government's plan was for the work to be done in Congress, but this was widely rejected. The 12-point "Agreement for Social Peace and a New Constitution" outlined a new constitution with citizen participation. This will be subject to a plebiscite to be held on 26th April 2020 where Chileans will be able to vote whether they want a new constitution and if so, whether they want it to be drafted by a mixed citi-

**Ricardo Salva in a member of Bethnal Green and Bow CLP**

zen-legislator convention or one entirely comprising elected citizens. Who will control these agreements politically and how they will move forward are obviously key concerns for protesters.

"This is an historic night for Chile" said Jaime Quintana, President of the Senate during a joint announcement by the ruling and opposition party leaders early on Friday 29 November 2019. The apparent reversal of the government's and the political opposition's position on a potential Constituent Assembly is seen as an important victory by some, while others have criticised it and rejected it. The Agreement for Social Peace and a New Constitution is seen as an escape route for a government which continues with a free-market economic programme, the longest neo-liberal programme applied to any country anywhere, and one which has validated a government with blood on its hands. This Agreement has allowed the government to avoid facing responsibility for the serious human rights violations committed during the protests of the last months.

Thanks to the support provided by the opposition parties, the right-wing Government has gained an intermission, a necessary respite from the continuous uprising. Last week the Council Leader from Estación Central, Rodrigo Delgado, publicly expressed a qualified support to The Agreement saying that "The most valuable aspect of it was to reach an agreement amongst the political parties". Yet, in its refusal to recognise the depth of indignation amongst the mass movement, the Government has attempted to apply an old formula of simultaneously taking away with one hand what they claim to be giving with the other. Gonzalo Brunel, the Home Secretary, has pointed out the necessity to re-establish public order as a condition for reaching "Not just the Social Pact, but also the Constitutional Agreement and the economic recovery agenda".

As a result, a 'Security Agreement' approved by the government and opposition parties enables criminalisation of the social protests with draconian sentences. These are measures openly directed to make the right to protest illegal.

Votes of the opposition parties and those representatives on the left were divided in supporting the Security Agreement measures, some abstained (including the Communist Party's elected parliamentarians) and only a small minority, voted against it. The Agreement between the right-wing government and the opposition parties shows that even when the Chilean right's ability to face the national crisis collapses rapidly, the bureaucracies and centre-left parties are acting in defence of the system in an attempt to halt the mass movement.

Social Unity (Unidad Social), the main umbrella organisation involved in leading the social uprising, comprising more than 200 groups, trade unions and social organisations is calling for an active opposition to the Agreement, and to continuing mobilisation, Cabildos and protests. A recent statement issued by Unidad Social (04.12.19) regards the Agreement for Social Peace, as the opposite, a declaration of war against the mass protest movement. **C**

# The Money Drain

**Sunit Bagree** shows how Southern Africa faces massive debt injustice

In August 2019, Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) the successor organisation to the Anti Apartheid Movement, published a major new report; "The Money Drain: How Trade Misinvoicing and Unjust Debt Undermine Economic and Social Rights in Southern Africa".

The report finds that the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region loses US\$8.8 billion in trade-related illicit outflows and US\$21.1 billion in external government debt payments per year. These huge financial outflows severely diminish resources for realising economic and social rights in Southern Africa.

While SADC governments are primarily responsible for realising the economic and social rights of their citizens, the governments of rich countries have significant legal and moral obligations to support these efforts.

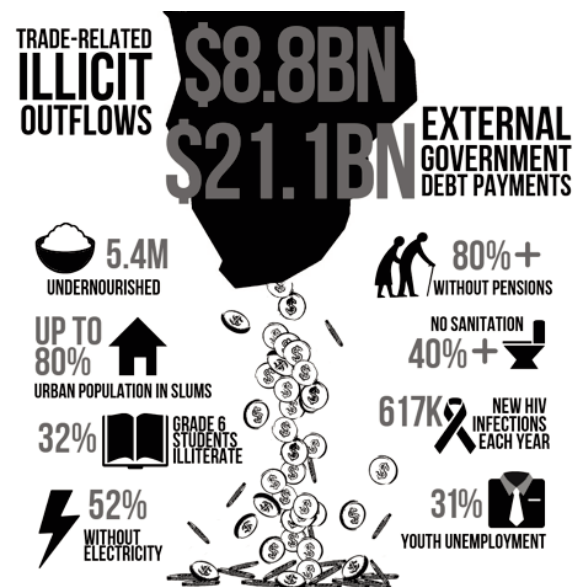
The report demonstrates that the scale of unrealised economic and social rights in Southern

Africa remains immense. For example, the youth unemployment rate is 31%, 5.4 million people are undernourished, there are at least 617,400 new HIV infections a year and more than 40% of the population in 12 countries do not have access to basic sanitation services.

After engaging in trade misinvoicing by falsely declaring the price, quantity or quality of a good or service on an invoice submitted to customs, criminals can use intermediaries in secrecy jurisdictions to capture and divert illicit profits to tax havens. The report estimates that South Africa alone is drained of at least US\$5.9 billion a year due to trade-related illicit outflows.

While the external debts of governments are not necessarily problematic for their citizens, some of the region's external public debt is illegal, some is odious, and some is illegitimate. The report calculates that Angola alone is drained of US\$12.1 billion a year in principal and interest payments on public debt.

Progress on tackling trade mis-



**Sunit Bagree is Senior Campaigns Officer for ACTSA. The full report can be found on [www.actsa.org](http://www.actsa.org)**

invoicing is fragmented and slow, and virtually nothing has been achieved to ensure debt justice. The Money Drain contains 12 recommendations to address these problems and promote economic and social rights in Southern Africa. **C**

## SPAIN

# Spanish Socialists walking a tightrope

**Brian O'Leary** reports on a narrow victory for Spain's Socialist Party with separatist and economic challenges facing the coalition

In the general election in last November the Socialist Party (PSOE) again became the largest party and has finally agreed to form a coalition government with the left radical grouping Unidas Podemos (UP). However as they are still only the largest minority block in the Parliament they need the support or abstention of smaller, mainly nationalist parties from the autonomous regions, for successful investiture.

In comparison with the May election, after which the PSOE avoided any serious attempt to link up with the UP, both parties have lost ground in their number of seats. On the other hand there has been a realignment and strengthening of the right, with not only a partial recovery of the corruption ridden conservative Popular Party (PP) but also a doubling of representation for the ultra-conservative racist party Vox, making it the third largest.

What had happened between the two elections to weaken the two main left parties?

The main reason was Catalonia. During the summer the trial for rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds of the separatist leaders of the independence referendum of 2017, forbidden by the Constitution, came to a conclusion in the Constitutional Court. The Catalan President at the time remained on the run in Belgium. Although they were cleared of rebellion nine were found guilty on other counts and sentenced collectively to a sum total of nearly 100 years in prison. Spain, and indeed Western Europe, now had its first political prisoners in living memory! Unsurprisingly, while independence protesters had always previously been peaceful, now violent confrontations with the riot police erupted.

Sanchez, the Prime Minister and leader of the PSOE, maintained that the independence of the judiciary and the Constitution itself had to be respected, although he called for dialogue. UP joined in with separatist par-

ties in condemning the outcome and renewing their demands for the right to self-determination. Meanwhile the positions on the right ranged from claims that Sanchez was still too conciliatory and a firmer restoration of law and order was needed, to Vox stoking up extreme nationalist demands to end regional autonomy and freedoms along Francoist lines.

Secondly, Spain experienced mass feminist demonstrations condemning violence against women, domestic and otherwise, and demanding legal changes. High profile rape cases and farcical trials further inflamed belief in the ingrained misogynist nature of Spanish society. Again Vox tried to exploit the situation by calling for the actual repeal of gender violence laws "... that discriminates against one of the sexes", hoping to co-opt the support of as many macho bigots as possible.

The continued migration crisis in the Mediterranean, with increased landings in Spain itself, was also used by the right to stoke xenophobic fears, including Islamophobia. Sanchez to his credit offered Spain as a safe haven for ships blocked by Salvini.

Then just before the November poll on 24th October, after a legal fight, permission was given to exhume and relocate Franco's body from The Valley of the Fallen, a monstrous granite monument celebrating his Civil War victory. For the PSOE Government and the left his continued burial there was an affront to democracy. The fascist right was livid and saw it as a moral outrage against their national hero. Beyond them it symbolically stirred unspoken and unresolved memories and anger on both sides in a country that has encoded in law the forgetting of all the crimes of the dictatorship.

Which brings us to the recent election result, with Sanchez undertaking a U-turn by trying to form a left coalition government. The coalition pre-agreement includes laudable aims on the

economy, welfare state, environment and citizen rights, but also includes:

i. Solutions to the Catalan crisis would have to be sought "... within the bounds of the Constitution"

ii. Control of Public expenditure to ensure fiscal balance.

These are effectively Sanchez's red lines. Iglesias, leader of Podemos, has agreed to these conditions to enable a coalition as he believes it "...will be the best vaccine against the far right". Nevertheless, there are problems.

The Constitution of 1978 included concessions by the PSOE at the time of the "...transition to democracy" to the political remnants of Franco, including the military. Besides the monarchy itself, article 2 guarantees "...the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation". This remained unchallenged subsequently by the PSOE and is obviously a roadblock to resolving Catalonia. UP, while supporting the right to self-determination, has previously advocated a federal solution. However, now that Vox is attacking the Constitution for conceding devolution and wants the scrapping of all autonomous rights, the left along with the centre right have pointedly and jointly celebrated its 41st anniversary. It is unlikely that a coalition can succeed in the investiture unless at least the left leaning ERC Catalan separatist party offers its cooperation, despite the Constitutional straightjacket to its independence and Republican ambitions and the imprisonment of its leader for 13 years.

The Constitution, amended recently by the PP, requires by law that the Euro Area's Stability and Growth Pact is adhered to. Doing so will constrain Sanchez's ability to tackle years of austerity and its social and economic consequences.

Once formed any left government would therefore be walking a tightrope. Survival cannot just rely on precarious parliamentary arithmetic but also on organising, empowering and mobilising the Left's extra-Parliamentary base. **C**



**Pedro Sanchez**

**Brian O'Leary is a member of Chingford and Woodgreen CLP**



# Impeached President Trump re-elected?

**Paul Garver** on the challenge for rivals aiming to stop Trump in 2020

In *Chartist* 282 (Sep-Oct 2016), I wrote that Hilary Clinton, then leading Donald Trump by double digits in the polls, might yet be defeated if the Democrats continued to support free trade treaties, neglect the frustration of formerly unionized workers in the industrial heartlands, and campaign against Trump without promoting a convincing program of their own. My worst fears were realized when Trump rode to victory by edging out the Democrats in former industrial areas where disgruntled white voters voted out their frustration. For the 2020 presidential election, I fear the path to hell is easier for the Democrats to follow.

In December, Trump was impeached in the House of Representatives for abusing his office to win political favors from Ukraine. The Republican-majority Senate will probably acquit him, so he will remain in office. Following every twist and turn of this distracting story, the media circus will only relent after Trump declares full vindication to his supporters. The real crises facing Americans – climate disruption, a dysfunctional health system, persecution of refugees, growing inequality and racism – will stay in the background.

Struggling for attention, numerous candidates in the Democratic primaries soldier on. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren evenly share the more progressive half of Democratic primary voters. Both are financed by huge numbers of individual donors, supporting ambitious programs like the Green New Deal, Medicare for All and free higher education, based on higher taxes of the super-rich.

Many other candidates are vying to be the 'moderate' alternative to the democratic socialism of Sanders and the anti-corporate progressive populism of Warren. Joe Biden is the sentimental choice of traditionalists, invoking the good old days of cautious presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama. Pete Buttigieg seems to be emerging as the most viable of the younger 'moderates'. Billionaire Michael Bloomberg now aims to buy his way into this role. (I think he is planning a run as an 'independent'.) African-American



**National polls show Sanders as the only potential candidate to lead Trump**

Deval Patrick, a former cautiously progressive governor of Massachusetts, appears to be hoping to become the 'next Barack Obama' following the withdrawal of Kamala Harris and Cory Booker.

Obama himself is an open advocate for a moderate who can beat Sanders/Warren in the primaries and then defeat Trump in the general election. The big Democratic donors, national party apparatus and their propagandists in the mass media (e.g. NY Times, MSNBC) appear consumed by the same search. This presumes that Trump, emerging unbowed from the impeachment hearings with his hardcore base intact, will be sufficiently discredited among Independents and swing voters that he can be defeated, even in the Electoral College, where political geography favours Republicans with their reactionary, racist and xenophobic appeals to older white voters. The most difficult problem is that some 35-40% of the electorate appears committed to Trump regardless of (or because of) his many transgressions.

We on the Left cannot simply dismiss the argument that the Democrats should nominate whoever can defeat Trump by carrying most of the so-called 'purple' states won by Obama but later by Trump. However, the 'pragmatic' Democratic strategy of opposing Trump without a strong reform program to combat inequality failed for Clinton in 2016 and probably would again in 2020. It would neither motivate younger voters to turn out

in sufficient numbers to enlarge the electorate nor, crucially motivate them to be politically active over the long haul.

Elections in our highly polarized polity are often won by increasing turnout and enthusiasm rather than by persuading a shrinking pool of 'swing voters'. The Left in and around the Democratic Party, with a different vision from that of the 'pragmatists', fights for sweeping programs to energize the progressive base of democratic activists, attract fresh support, particularly from people of colour and younger voters, and eliminate the influence of wealthy donors. Higher participation has accompanied such progressive victories as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez over a long-term New York Democratic incumbent, Ayanna Pressley in a Boston area Congressional seat and DSA members to Chicago City Council and state legislatures around the country.

On the presidential nomination the 'Squad' is split, with Tlaib, Ocasio-Cortez and Omar supporting Sanders, while Pressley has endorsed Warren. DSA, PDA and Our Revolution support Sanders; the Working Families Party endorses Warren. Up to and beyond the 2020 presidential election, any possibility of success will depend on durable collaboration between democratic socialists and progressives, both electorally and in the streets. If Sanders, Warren or a centrist Democrat became President, it would require massive mobilizations of progressive social movements to secure radical reforms. But a Trump (or Trump clone) victory would jeopardize democracy and the rule of law: much of our political work could be forced underground to survive.

Recent national polls show Sanders as the only potential candidate to consistently lead Trump. That many of the huge crowd in Iowa recently were there more for Ocasio-Cortez than for Sanders is no problem. He long carried the torch for democratic socialism in relative obscurity but now he is joined by a much younger, more diverse cohort with sweeping goals for transforming American society. **C**

**Paul Garver is a member of Democratic Socialists of America**

## CONSTITUTION

# No more Labour Red Walls?

Polarisation into Brexit and Remain broke Labour's coalition says **Mary Southcott**, now we need a constitutional convention and PR to reassemble common ground

If you had one wish for a replay general election, what to choose? Different Leader, EU policy, anti-Semitism or islamophobia, time of year, no rain. What about another voting system, a political culture from doing things for people to empowering people to do things together? What did Labour say about democracy? Most people thought democracy was fulfilling the referendum. After finding a way to win the next General Election, let's move from relying on Red Walls to finding Labour voters everywhere with a PR system.

Paul Mason, from defeated Leigh, wrote: "Once Farage stood down in 317 seats, the only thing that could have stopped the Tories was (a) an electoral pact between progressive parties, (b) an unprecedented turnout by progressive young voters, or (c) massive tactical voting". None of these happened. Jo Swinson spent as much time vilifying Jeremy as Johnson. We never mentioned votes@16. And although the Mirror's guide to tactical voting would have defeated the Tories, Labour opposition let the voting system triumph. Now some say: "No More Labour Prime Ministers without Progressive Pacts and Electoral Reform".

Let's look back to UKIP winning the 2014 European elections. Instead of discovering why some red wall 'working class' voters were supporting this socially conservative, English nationalist party, we told ourselves that they were taking votes from the Tories, while Lynton Crosby ensured they kept their voters by offering that EU referendum. When the 2015 exit poll gave the Tories a slender majority with the loss of all Labour seats in Scotland, except one, Labour's first red wall had collapsed. We blamed the Scottish Independence Referendum but it was just as much about our safe seat mentality.

Straight into the Euro Referendum without the aid of a written Constitution which might helpfully have said, what a Labour or LibDem opposition might have raised, a threshold of fifty per cent of the electorate or two thirds of votes cast, advisory not mandatory. The 2016 WARP, 'without all those



Reading pads', assumed traditional Labour voters would either vote Brexit or stay at home. We didn't knock them up. Had we talked with them we might have changed their minds or alerted ourselves to the future. In seats where Labour was, they thought, always going to win, our Red Wall, voters could make a difference, protest at being taken for granted, or blame something and the EU was as good as anything. At last they had an effective vote, to say here I am, have you noticed? Where the industrial revolution begun, Labour voters voted Leave. Did we approach them? Or join their condemnation?

Regional offices based tactical decisions on polls at the start of the 2017 General Election. This massively warped the work that was being done with people misdirected from seats that were won. Labour's Leadership was fighting for the popular vote as in a PR system. We only have to mention Al Gore or Hilary Clinton to know that wasn't going to work. Our manifesto was a PR one whereas in a general election the effective voter is an uncertain switcher in a targeted seat who needs constant reassurance while the media play on fears of immigration, crime and national security.

The Labour membership is skewed to the south and policy

moved from "Labour heartlands" to university metropolitan cities. Labour's members in Red Wall constituencies, often untypical Remain voters, didn't raise Brexit. It would lose votes. The voting system played a canny role masking the results of Theresa May's 2017 incursions into Labour territory. Many seats were vulnerable to the 2019 Tory onslaught.

Without a decision on our relationship with the EU, Labour was totally vulnerable. To be successful Labour needs to nurture its link between those who need a Labour government in the way the 2019 Manifesto elaborated and those who see the benefit of a more equal society, what we have in common rather than what divides us. Polarised into Leave and People's Vote broke this coalition.

In 2007, the Labour Campaign for Electoral Reform, wrote a pamphlet entitled *Reversing Labour Retreat*. We warned about under registration, overtaking, boundary changes which the Tories can legitimately implement, the need to endorse voting reform while in government. It is high time Labour acknowledged that its membership is already pro PR. Of 632 Labour candidates over a quarter, 163, were open in their support and 60 went on to be MPs. Make Votes Matter commissioned YouGov research showing that seventy five per cent of Labour's membership supports PR.

We will be working with extra parliamentary forces while still being a Westminster response to a rabidly right Tory government. Is there anything, but money, to stop us holding a citizens' assembly on our democracy or a Constitutional Convention trailed in our Manifesto? Couldn't we join up the dots on English devolution, financing local government, citizenship education, votes at 16, registration, Lords replacement. We need to find space to find anti Tory consensus which means working in a non tribal but assertive way with supporters of other parties also opposed to the Johnson agenda. That is the challenge and to find a leader that understands why our policy going into the next general election has to be PR. **C**

**Mary Southcott is a member of Chartist EB**

# Can't pay, won't pay 30 years on

**Simon Hannah** on lessons of the battle to defeat the poll tax

**I**t is 30 years since the Poll Tax was introduced in Scotland and this year is the anniversary of the riot in Trafalgar Square that made headline news around the world.

The Poll Tax was Margaret Thatcher's "flag ship" policy, the culmination of a decade of sweeping political, social and economic reforms designed to redistribute power and wealth from the poorest to the richest. The Poll Tax - officially called the Community Charge - was introduced to replace the rates as a way to pay for local government. It was controversial because the Community Charge was a flat tax, every adult paid the same.

The tax was designed to fix what the Tories saw as a grand iniquity, that lots of poor people benefited from local government services but they didn't have to pay towards them. For the New Right this only encouraged feckless layabouts to vote for high spending Labour councils that would then rinse the middle classes. If the poor had to contribute more then perhaps they wouldn't be so keen on high spending socialist Town Hall administrations.

In the words of arch Thatcherite-Nicholas Ridley "why would a duke pay more than a dust-man? It is only because we have been subjected to socialist ideas for the last 50 years that people think this is fair." In practice many people simply could not afford to pay the new charge, despite various rebates available for the poorest. Tax bills more than doubled overnight. Protests were inevitable.

Whilst Labour opposed the tax in principle, the party proved to be woefully inadequate when it came to resisting the new proposals. Neil Kinnock was hurtling rapidly to the right, desperate to prove to moderate voters that Labour was not a radical party of left wing trouble makers but a sensible party capable of ruling for the common good. When the left, led by Militant alongside other socialists and anarchist groups, began a mass non-payment campaign Labour clamped down hard, suspending and expelling activists. Worse still Labour councils had to implement the tax - this led to the sight of Labour councillors imprisoning Labour members and voters, thousands of people were



**Poll Tax demo in the 1980s**

imprisoned for non-payment. Many of those jailed were unemployed, low paid or single mothers with limited finances.

The mass non-payment campaign proved to be hugely effective. The slogan 'can't pay won't pay' summed up the principle - some people couldn't afford the new tax, others could but refused to pay on political grounds. Millions of people didn't pay their bills, causing a crisis for local councils and the government.

The non-payment campaign wasn't passive. Thousands of people mobilised to guard homes from bailiffs and sheriffs, sent by the courts to recover the debts through seizing goods. When people were in court it meant hundreds of people turning out in solidarity, flooding court rooms, arguing with judges, pulling fire alarms, anything that would slow down the judicial process. When people were imprisoned it meant solidarity rallies outside calling for their immediate release.

The mass protest on 31 March 1990, the day before the tax was due to come into effect in England and Wales turned into a full blown inner city riot with the police fighting thousands of angry demonstrators. The scenes shocked the establishment, as did the huge protests outside Town Halls up and down the country as council chambers were stormed by locals to prevent the Poll Tax levels being set.

This was a radical movement or resistance, not just protest. One

that didn't limit itself to a few token marches but actively sought to disrupt the machinery of state and judiciary.

The fight against the Poll Tax not only won (it was scrapped by 1991 after only two years) it also contributed to the downfall of Thatcher. The issue was so politicised that in several by-elections in 1990 previously safe Conservative seats fell to opposition parties, outrage over the Poll Tax was front and centre. No Tory MP felt safe. This, combined with the internal divisions over Europe, led to Thatcher's resignation in November 1990. She was driven from Downing Street with tears in her eyes as millions cheered up and down the country.

There are many lessons from the anti poll tax campaign, but a salient one is the role of Labour. When movements erupt that seek to overturn unjust laws, Labour shouldn't see itself as a party of 'loyal opposition' wedded to the parliamentary system. It should be a part of resistance, throwing its political and social weight on the side of the people to stand together against the tyranny of the bosses and their political stooges in government. Labour failed the test of the poll tax movement and then lost the 1992 general election. It doesn't pay to stand in opposition to the people when the people are fighting back. That wins you no friends.

As the old slogan goes, "better to break the law than break the poor." **C**

**Simon Hannah's book on the anti Poll Tax movement 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' is due in March 2020, Pluto Press**



## YOUTH VIEW

# Tories retreat on gender equality

**Alice Arkwright** asks what does the Queen's speech mean for women?

In the same week as the Queen's speech, the UK slipped down the World Economic Forum gender equality index by six places and an independent enquiry showed that the criminal justice system is failing victims of sexual violence.

Young women are the demographic least likely to have voted and the Young Women's Trust research shows that two thirds have lost confidence in politicians as they struggle to cope with the impact of austerity. The UN report on poverty showed that life expectancy for women in the most deprived half of England has stalled since 2011 and fallen for women in the poorest 20% of the population. At a time when changes are so badly needed for women, what did this Queen's speech offer.

## The Domestic Abuse bill

The speech included reference to the bill, which has been beset by delays including due to the unlawful shut down of parliament. The bill creates a statutory definition, which states that abuse is not only physical or sexual, but can be emotional, economic and include controlling behavior. It also prohibits perpetrators of abuse from cross-examining their victims in person in family courts and monitors the response of local authorities and other agencies in tackling domestic violence.

However, the bill does not address the chronic underfunding of support services for women escaping abuse and violence, including refuges. The charity Refuge has experienced cuts to 80% of its services since 2011. There is a desperate need for investment in infrastructure, especially specialised services for BME women.

Migrant women are also particularly vulnerable as they cannot access housing benefits, refuge spaces or private rental because landlords are required to undertake immigration checks. There are also cases of migrant women being detained when reporting abuse to the police. Given the Conservative's track record on migrant rights, it is hard to believe they will do more to protect these vulnerable women.

Universal Credit is noticeable for its absence in the speech. Reforms to the benefits system are vital to protect women from violence.



The Step Up Migrant Women coalition calls for new legislation to protect migrant women

Women currently stay with perpetrators or end up homeless due to a lack of affordable and social housing and under Universal Credit one benefit payment is made to a household rather than separate payments to the individuals in it, meaning victims can become more financially dependent on their abuser.

The government also committed to pushing through requirements for voter ID at polling stations. This will leave thousands of potential voters marginalised from political participation and without a voice, including many women in abusive relationships who will not have access to ID.

Currently three women a week die at the hands of a former or current partner. These commitments are nowhere near enough to end this.

## Workers' rights

The UK has dropped down the World Economic Forum gender ranking largely due to inequality in the workplace, our gender pay gap and poor political representation.

Worryingly the government has stripped out key protections for workers' rights that were included in previous versions of the EU withdrawal bill. Instead promising that a separate employment bill will enhance and protect workers' rights.

The lack of detail means we have no idea what employment rights will be in law by the end of 2020, offering little hope that there will be improvements for women workers. Flexible working has been included but there is no commit-

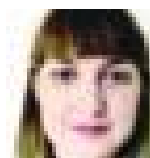
ment to ensure this from day one of a job, there is no specific legislation to expand the national living wage and the government has also begun to attack trade unions, which are the best way for workers to ensure their rights. There was also no mention of the women who will lose out due to changes in the state pension age and no commitment to a preventative duty that would make employers legally responsible for sexual harassment at work.

At a minimum, the government must commit to keeping the same levels of equalities protection that we have under the EU including maternity discrimination, equal pay and safety at work. Women also need real reform of parental leave policies, so it is easier to share time off; stronger rights to flexible working; more affordable childcare; increases in statutory parental pay; and more pressure on employers to tackle their gender pay gap.

## Investment in social care

Finally, considering that 80% of paid carers and 60% of unpaid carers are women, social care is a gendered issue. However, the commitments on social care lacked substance. The speech stated ministers will seek 'a cross-party consensus on proposals for long term reform of social care' but there was no specific social care bill.

The Queen's speech demonstrates this government is not serious about gender equality. Their commitments are not enough to reverse the impact of austerity on women, to prevent violence against women or girls or to ensure equality in the workplace. **C**



**Alice Arkwright**  
works for the  
TUC

# The Audacity of Hope

**Patrick Mulcahy**  
on a tense  
portrait of  
rich and  
poor in  
South Korea

If one film encapsulates the end of the 2010s, it is South Korean writer-director Bong Joon-ho's **'Parasite'**. D deservedly winning the Palme D'Or at Cannes in 2019, it portrays with wit, heart, suspense, pathos and horror, the unbridgeable gap between rich and poor in Korean society. The more culturally specific a film is, the more universal is its message. **'Parasite'** explodes with universality. It is a film that embodies the title of Barack Obama's 2006 book of essays, *The Audacity of Hope*.

Our heroes are the impoverished Kim family, whom we first meet trying to catch an internet signal from their mobile phones, chasing it through the dim enclosure of their semi-basement apartment. The free access they have relied upon has been abruptly stopped – their dependence on other people's wi-fi is a metaphor for their parasitical status. Amidst constructing pizza boxes for a local firm, elder son Ki-woo (Choi Wu-shik) is visited by his well-to-do student friend, Min-hyuk (Park Seo-joon) who announces he is about to go travelling. He has a lucrative job as an English teacher to Park Da-hye (Jung Ziso), the daughter of the head of an IT company. Min-hyuk will put in a recommendation for Ki-woo as a means of preventing other college boys from seducing Da-hye – he hopes to marry her one day. Ki-woo – and the audience – marvel at Park house for its spaciousness and elegance.

Da-hye's mother watches Ki-woo's lesson with interest and then mentions her young son's artistic 'ability'. Does Ki-woo know a teacher? Ki-woo's sister, Ki-jeong (Park So-dam) is an excellent forger. She prepared documents to convince the Park family that Ki-woo had completed his college education. Ki-woo presents her as someone unrelated to him who has a rare talent and whose services are difficult to secure. Before long, both siblings have a job, then work to secure employment for their father and mother, replacing both the chauffeur and housekeeper respectively. Their plan is executed perfectly, until the housekeeper, Moon-gwang (Lee Jeun-eun) returns one rainy evening.

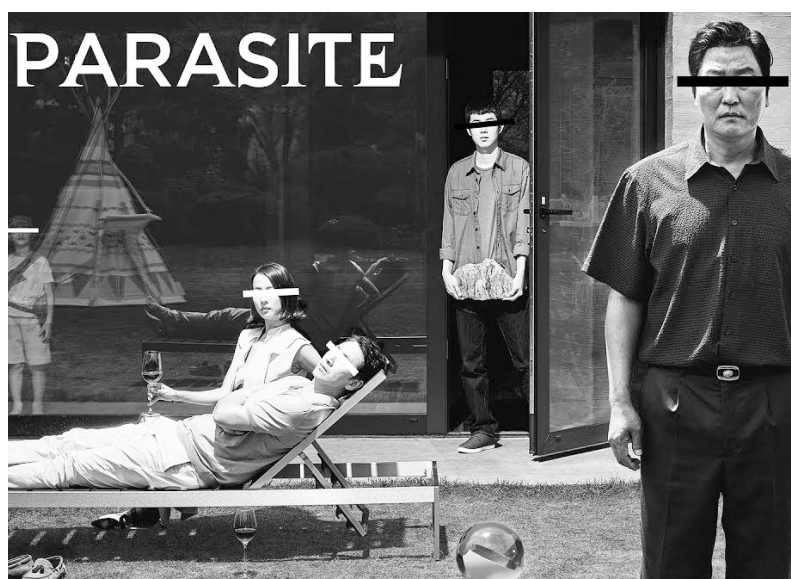
What happens next entirely turns the film on its head – and

includes a joke about impersonating a North Korean newsreader. The poor fight one another whilst the little that the Kim family possess is damaged by flooding.

**'Parasite'** is both very funny and entertaining. We root for the Kim family, at least initially because we sympathise with their impoverishment and their inability to work. The children understandably want to help their parents – they are loyal and respect-

is that, although they may have competence and education, 'poor people' cannot escape their background. Park Dong-ik (Lee Sun-kyun) complains to his wife of a smell he detects whilst sharing a car with his new driver, Ki-taek (Song Kang-ho). It is the smell of poverty associated with the Kim family's flooded home.

Joon-ho doesn't present class difference as a problem to be solved. Rather it is the lack of



ful – even though their strategy is unfair. Some scenes have the precision of farce.

The shift in tone is also consummately achieved. The second half of the film has both elements of horror and Robinson Crusoe. Normally, such shifts dispense with what we enjoy. Here, though, the shift adds depth and substance to the idea that however far one gets ahead, someone else suffers.

Although the mother, Yeon-gyo is introduced as 'simple', Joon-ho doesn't parody the rich family. Yeon-gyo simply sees the best in her children's endeavours. Her young son has a genuine trauma which is revealed in the second half.

At the heart of the film is the question: how helpful is it to aspire to be rich? Both families struggle. Both feature loving relationships. Money does not confer happiness – only security. By the end of the film, only the acquisition of excessive wealth will save one of the characters. That's where pathos and realism come in.

The other point Joon-ho makes

security experienced by the most impoverished that is a major problem in South Korea. The country has functioning social support schemes for families living in absolute poverty, but it also has significant youth unemployment and an ageing population. Only degrees from a trio of universities – Seoul, Korea and Yonsei (the so-called 'SKY') – are said to guarantee a job for a *chaebol* or conglomerate such as LG, Hyundai and Samsung. Students with degrees from other universities struggle to find good jobs.

Private education, as shown in the film, is a necessary consequence of limited access to good jobs. The real problem is whether only degrees from 'SKY' are necessary to guarantee prosperity. This is really a question for the sixty or so *chaebol*. One question not in doubt is that **'Parasite'** is compassionate, tense and thoughtful – one of the few prize-winning movies that genuinely deserves the hype.

**'Parasite' opens in UK cinemas on Friday 7 February 2020**



## BOOK REVIEWS

# The Consequences of Balfour

**Duncan Bowie**  
on the  
legacy of  
the Balfour  
Declaration

**Legacy of Empire: Britain, Zionism and the Creation of Israel**  
Gardner Thompson  
SAQI £20

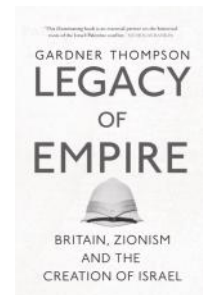
**L**ewis Goodall is living proof Thompson is a colonial historian who has previously written on East Africa. He has been brave to venture into this territory which is well trodden by specialists and which remains highly contentious. Many previous studies are partisan, whether Zionist or anti-Zionist, and the lack of partisanship in Thompson's work means that the book is actually a very useful contribution to the debate. Thompson's starting point is on the Balfour declaration of 1917, but after examining, as many other works do, the prehistory and the Zionist campaign to win British support, he focuses on its consequences and on the British post-war occupation and on diplomacy during the period of the British mandate in Palestine from 1922 to 1948.

The book therefore examines the failure of the British government to deliver on the commitment in the declaration that "nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine." He notes that the declaration did not in fact guarantee the political rights of the non-Jewish population, who remained the majority population of Palestine throughout the mandate

period, despite the rapid increase in Jewish immigration.

The book considers the failure of successive administrations, most significantly that led by the first High Commissioner, the Zionist Herbert Samuel, to constrain both Jewish immigration and the increasing political role of the Jewish Agency. Gardner points out that the promotion of Zionism was actually incorporated into both the terms of the British Government's 1922 White Paper and the terms of the mandate, which was drafted by the British government, in contradiction of the League of Nations objective of working towards self-determination by the existing population of a mandated territory.

Gardner is more sympathetic to the attempt by Sir John Chancellor, High Commissioner from 1928-1931, who recognised the inherent contradiction in the Balfour declaration and sought to adopt a more balanced approach to the conflicting interests of Jews and Arabs. Chancellor's successor, Sir Arthur Wauchope, High Commissioner until 1938 was to openly favour Zionism, and British support for Zionism was to continue, despite the attacks of Zionist organisations such as Irgun, Hagannah and the Stern gang, on the British military and civil governance bodies, until Britain surrendered the mandate in 1947. Ernest Bevin stated in the British parliament that "the obligations



undertaken to the two communities in Palestine have been shown to be irreconcilable."

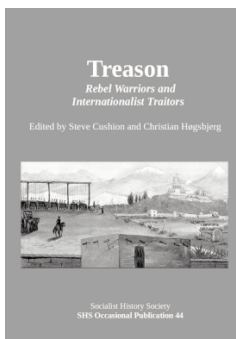
A series of attempts to partition Palestine between Jewish and Arab communities had all failed, and the boundaries established by the UN in 1947 were soon breached as military action by the new Israeli state occupied territory allocated to the Arab state, first in 1948-9 and subsequently in 1967 with the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan heights. In his conclusion, Gardner comments that the Balfour declaration and the continued British commitment to supporting the establishment of a national home in Palestine for the Jewish people at the expense of the second commitment to protect the rights of the non-Jewish population bears some responsibility for the divisions in Palestine over the last 100 years, and that the centenary of the declaration was an opportunity to acknowledge this responsibility rather than a cause for celebration.

**Gardner Thompson will be speaking about his book at the Socialist History Society meeting on Saturday 25th January at 2pm in Red Lion Hall, basement, Tresham House, Red Lion Square, entrance via Lamb's Conduit Passage by Conway Hall, Holborn, WC1R 4RE. All Welcome**

# Rebel Warriors and Internationalist Traitors

**Treason**  
Steve Cushion and Christian Hogsbjerg  
Socialist History Society £5

**T**he latest Occasional Publication from the SHS provides a fascinating insight into some curious and largely forgotten historical by-ways. The booklet includes nine essays on radicals and socialists who fought against their home countries or who supported revolutions in countries other than their own. The range is wide from Jonathan North's study of Polish deserters from Napoleon's army in the 1800's, who on being sent to the West Indies supported the native revolutionaries against the French to Ian Birchall on French supporters of the Algerian and Vietnamese independence struggles in the



1950's.

Other essays cover British supporters of Irish freedom in 1916, communist resistance to Nazism, a study of the German Walter Patzold who fought with the Italian partisans in 1943, Germans who supported the Jewish resistance, German and Italian volunteers in the French resistance and a study

by Toby Abse of Ilio Barontini, an Italian who joined the Ethiopian army fighting Mussolini's occupation before becoming a communist senator in post-war Italy. There is also a poem by David Rovics commemorating the Irish battalion who fought in the Mexican war against the United States of 1846-8.

An introductory essay by the editors provides an excellent and fully referenced overview from the English civil war to the African National Congress discussing the nature of the nation state and internationalism. This is an important historical project, rescuing some important partisans from the archives. The 95 page booklet is well illustrated and excellent value for money. It is also an inspiration for further reading and research on a largely ignored historical theme.

**Duncan Bowie**  
on trans-  
national  
rebels



# A Coven of Villains

**Glyn Ford**  
on the  
Electric  
Frontline

**Mindf\*ck - Cambridge Analytica and the Plot to Break the World**  
**Christopher Wylie**  
Random House £20

**W**ylie makes a convincing case that the outcome of the Brexit Referendum was as much the result of cheating and fraud as was Trump's 'victory'. Wylie blows the whistle on himself. He was the mastermind behind Cambridge Analytica's crimewave. He was slow to realise that 'simply following orders' was no defence. Just as the National Rifle Association duplicitously claims 'Guns don't kill people' Facebook argues it's a neutral platform abused and misused by a minority. It was that complacency Wylie preyed on. The insight was don't change the policies to suit the voters, change the voters to match the policies.

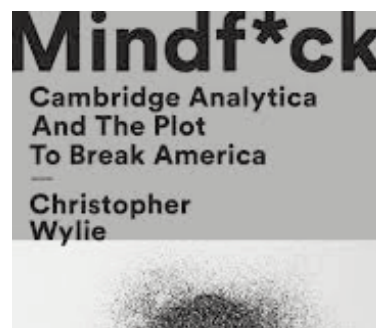
Yet despite all the revelations about technologically enhanced voter suppression and dirty - and murderous - tricks, systematic fraud and foreign interference Labour has remained indifferent. One knows why the Tories say nothing. They are already long down the Republican road to winning elections on the backs of those who can't vote or don't vote. Dame Shirley Porter was the Tory pioneer - and poster girl - of voter suppression and manipulation in the late eighties. She has convictions. Now Boris Johnson plans to nationalise the programme with a ground war of photo IDs required to vote, while refusing to tackle the air war of social media manipulation. It's the silence of the lambs. Those about to be electorally fleeced genuflect to the myth of voter fraud!

Mindf\*ck has a positive coven of villains, Steve Bannon and Nigel Farage, the creepy Mercer billionaires in the US and Britain's

'Poundshop' Arron Banks - even Nick Clegg gets a walk-on part - as we learn how Cambridge Analytica subverted democracy. There were no red lines the company was not prepared to cross. In Nigeria trying to sway the Presidential election against Muhammadu Buhari, a mild-mannered Muslim, they ran stealth ads on Google claiming he would introduce sharia law backed with actual footage of a group of men tying up a woman, drenching her with petrol and burning her to death.

Wylie was on the electronic frontline. His insight was to mine data on millions, with Facebook's compliance, merge it with all the commercial and government data that could be bought, borrowed and stolen then sort, winnow and dice it into hundreds and thousands of clusters for bespoke attention. This was lightyears beyond 'mosaic' that Labour used at the end of the Blair years to segment the population into fifty categories. It was the transformation of quantity into quality throwing open the doors to mass manipulation. The neurotics and conspiracy theorists were segmented out and bombarded with messages designed to enrage and incite - it would be fascinating to see Cambridge Analytica's messaging for Thomas Mair, the lone wolf terrorist who murdered Jo Cox MP in the shadow of the Brexit referendum.

Minorities were set at each other's throats. The set of racists and xenophobes running the show encouraged Asian voters to back Brexit because 'the EU's free movement provisions discriminated in favour of foreigners over their families' while hundreds of other voter segments were being fed migration myths encouraging them to vote Leave to stop the flood. It was an invisible campaign running under



the electoral radar. It addressed those who had lost the way to the ballot box decades ago or had never found it in the first place. It worked and they got away with it. Not enough of the crime happened in Britain. One of the managers from the incendiary Nigeria project went on to the Cabinet Office.

Surely if paedophiles can be prosecuted for crimes anywhere in the world the same should apply to electoral fraud. Those who are caught cheating in the Olympics are stripped of their medals. Yet the Electoral Commission's view is that even with an election won with fraud and illegal financing the result stands.

What is to be done? Wylie suggests the establishment of a Digital Regulatory Agency with statutory duties for corporations and a mandatory professional code of conduct for software engineers. I'm sceptical, but better than nothing. More importantly we need legislation to give us ownership of our own data. And the right to function in the digital world without selling it and when we do sell it maintain control over its onward transition. Mindf\*ck is a salutary warning of how the alt-right is operating to undermine western-style democracy. Those who fail to do everything to stop these imposters and racists, thieves and fascists are not victims, but accomplices!

# Miserablism

**Peter Kenyon**  
offers a  
very short  
perplexed  
view

**What's Left Now: The history and future of social democracy**  
**Andrew Hindmoor**  
Oxford University Press £20

**T**his author asserts that "one of the distinguishing features of the left in Britain is that it holds a remorselessly bleak and Miserablist view of our recent political history". Well, if that isn't an Aunt Sally waiting to be bowled

over by an eager author, I promise never to review another book again.

An 18-page Introduction never endears me to a book. But I struggled on. Compared to Paul Mason's *Clear Bright Future* and Lewis Goodall's *Left for Dead*, Hindmoor's analysis appears dank and shallow. His final phrase concludes: "...Sometimes it pays to be cautious". Indeed.



## BOOK REVIEWS

## Thinker and politician

**Duncan  
Bowie**  
on the  
'third way'  
Marxist

**Otto Bauer**  
**Ewa Czerwinska-Schupp**  
**Haymarket \$28**

**B**auer was the leading theoretician of Austro-Marxism and leader of the Austrian Social Democratic Workers' party through most of the interwar period. He served as Foreign Minister in the first Austrian republic and was a participant in the Second International, then the Vienna international of 1921-3 and finally in the Labour and Socialist International. Exiled from Austria in 1934, he died in Paris in 1938. Czerwinska-Schupp is a Polish academic, and the book, which originated as a PhD dissertation, was originally published in Polish and then in German. Unlike many studies of Marxist theory, the book is relatively easy to read. As most of Bauer's voluminous writings have not been translated from German into English, this book which is both a biography and a comprehensive study of Bauer's theoretical work is doubly welcome. It can be read in tandem with Haymarket's recent two volumes of writings of the Austro-Marxists edited by Blum and Smallbone which includes some of Bauer's most important essays, translated into English for the first time.

After an introduction to Bauer's personal and political trajectory, the book is divided into the themes of Bauer's theoretical work: his early studies of the materialist view of history; his contribution to the theory of imperialism; his writings on the national question (generally regarded as his most significant theoretical contribution); his development of a 'third way' to socialism (between traditional social democracy and bolshevism); his writings on the state, democracy and socialism; his view of war; and his theory of fascism. In a short review, I will restrict my comments to two key elements. Firstly, Bauer was highly critical of concepts of nationalism and national self-determination. This partly arose from his experience within the Austro-Hungarian state before the First World War. He argued that nationalism was cultural rather than territorial and

supported federal structures. He was therefore in conflict with Czech, South Slav and Polish socialists who sought to secede from the Austro-Hungarian empire, and who succeeded in doing so in 1919. However, in 1918, Bauer argued that the residual Austria, as a linguistically and culturally German territory should combine with Germany. As foreign secretary, Bauer advocated the 'anschluss', which was rejected by the Treaty of Versailles. It was therefore difficult for Bauer to oppose the 'anschluss' when it finally occurred in 1938, by

being divided between a socialist Vienna and a Christian socialist countryside, Bauer nevertheless retained his belief in a parliamentary route to power, that is until 1934.

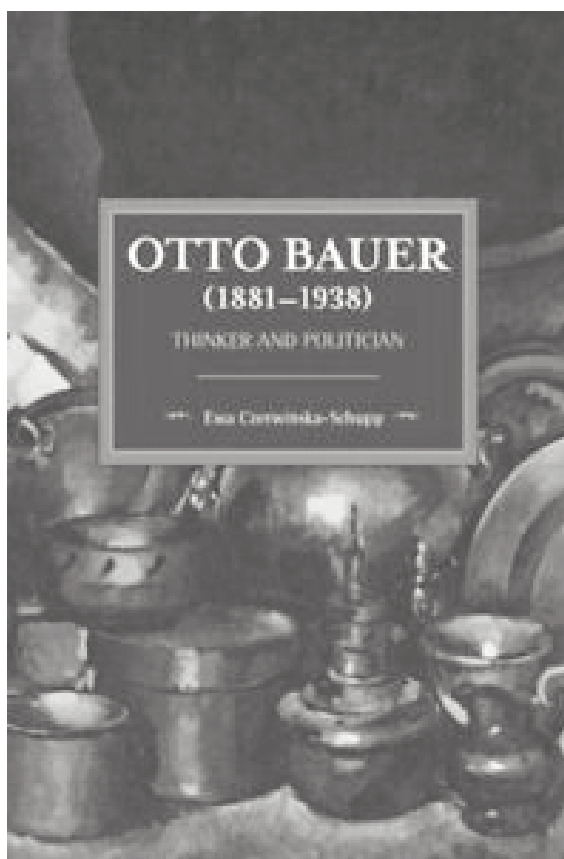
He was highly critical of Bolshevism (being close to the Mensheviks, whose exiled leaders were active in both the Vienna and labour and Socialist Internationals) but nevertheless founded the Vienna international in an attempt to unite socialist and communist movements. When this attempt failed in 1923, Bauer's opposition to

revolutionary vanguardism took him and his fellow Austro-Marxists into the Labour and socialist International. Bauer therefore did not support the uprising led by the small Austrian Communist party and the socialist paramilitary Schutzbund in 1934, though in exile he provided support to the Revolutionary Socialist Party, who sought to oppose the Nazi led administration.

In his writings in exile, Bauer acknowledged the failure of the socialist's parliamentary strategy and its failure to develop an effective response to the growth of both the religious and nationalistic Austro-fascism of Fey and the Heimwehr (whose rise the socialists largely ignored) or the growth of Nazism, which given Bauer's mistaken support of the Anschluss, was to be the greater threat. It should however be recognised that the Austrian

socialists were debarred by the Austro-fascists, four years before Hitler's victory parade in Vienna, a parade that was in fact welcomed by the majority of German Austrians.

Bauer accepted a personal responsibility for the failure of Austrian socialism. However, the democratic tradition of Austrian socialism was to have its reward in the establishment of a new socialist led government after the Second World War. Despite his disappointments and inconsistencies, Bauer is an important socialist theorist and Czerwinska-Schupp, her translator and publisher should be thanked for giving him the profile he deserves.



which time Bauer had been in exile for four years.

The second key issue was Bauer's attempt to pursue a new approach to socialism. Bauer was a 'left' socialist but was also strongly committed to democracy and to the representative parliamentary route to socialism. Despite the fact that the urbanised working class in Austria never achieved a parliamentary majority and was only briefly in government as part of a coalition, headed by the socialist Karl Renner as Austria's first post WW1 president, and the fact that the Austrian socialists did not organise in the rural areas (Austria

# Lessons of October for Third World liberation

**Don Flynn**  
on an Afro-  
Caribbean  
Marxist

**The Russian Revolution: A view from the Third World**  
**Walter Rodney**  
Verso, £16.99

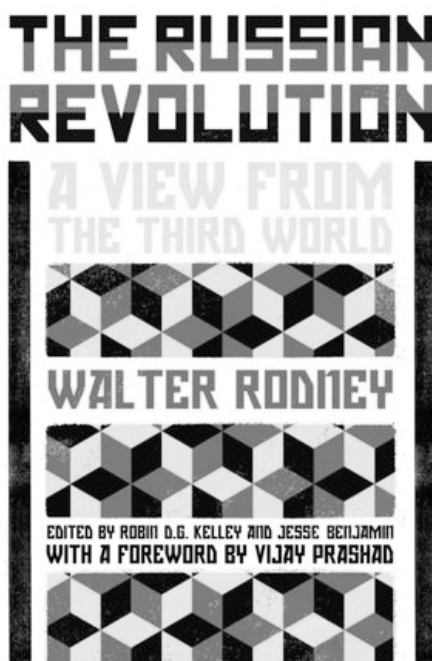
**W**alter Rodney's most important contribution to Marxist thinking about the emergence of global capitalism will forever be *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, also published by Verso as a companion to this volume. With the advantage of his own roots in Caribbean society he was able to understand the phenomenon of underdevelopment as the outcome of the aggressive, profit-seeking regimes imposed on his home region, rather than the inherent backwardness of its people.

His analysis added to the sketches of the role that capitalist imperialism played in transferring resources, entrenching poverty in one place and pooling prosperity in others which had been provided by Marx, Engels and Lenin. Dealing with the concrete example of Africa, Rodney laid bare the processes through which exploitation worked to extract value from the labouring classes in colonial and post-colonial societies and facilitated its appearance in the developed nations, not just as profit, but also as higher wages, social welfare and security for their working class citizens.

But in addition to what might be thought of as scholarly work primarily intended to develop a line of argument, Rodney was also an activist who looked for opportunities to work alongside others struggling for liberation, across the Caribbean region, the United States, and Africa.

*The Russian Revolution: A View from the Third World* emerged from a series of lectures given by Rodney during the five years when he was resident in Tanzania and working at the University of Dar es Salaam between 1969 and 1974. At that time the newly independent country was trying to forge a version of socialism that was relevant to its circumstances with a predominantly rural population engaged in subsistence agriculture. The

experiment with cooperative, ujamaa village structures was seen by Rodney as being analogous to the efforts made by the Soviet Union to solve the problem of the backwardness of its own rural sector during the 1920s and 30s. Working with students expected to play a role in sealing the success of the Tanzanian model, Rodney sought to provide them with a broader context rooted Marxism which would help the young country along its socialist path.



Much of the content of the early lectures deals with problems of historiography. How does the researcher access 'the truth' about a particular historical event? How much is decided by the inevitable bias, forged by culture, class and prejudice which any individual will bring to the inquiry? Is there a reliable way to check the tendency towards subjectivity? Rodney's confidence in dialectical materialism as a thoroughly scientific approach to the study of history sets the scene for a scrutiny of the revolution which devolves on what is claimed to be the objective fact of struggle between social classes.

For the basic material of what constitutes the 'facts' of the two

revolutions of 1917 – March and October – Rodney draws on an extensive list which consists of the works of the officially approved Soviet historians whose work circulated outside the country after the 1930s, contrasted with a wide range of non-Soviet accounts, most of which are hostile to the claims made for the achievements of the Bolsheviks. In a chapter devoted to a discussion of Trotsky's three volume history Rodney clearly finds it the account he finds most congenial,

explaining as it does how a contest between the classes in a country conventionally presented as backward could lay the basis for a socialist society based on the authority of the working class.

All of this must have been encouraging for the cadre of future leaders of their country that Rodney was addressing back in the early 1970s. The bigger problem was how to account for the development of Soviet society in the decades after the enthusiasm for socialist change following 1917. The view that the state built by the revolution had degenerated into an oppressive bureaucracy pursuing its own interests – essentially Trotsky's interpretation from the mid-1930s onwards – is inimical to Rodney's own wish to demonstrate the continued viability of the Soviet socialist road.

Criticism of the disastrous effects of the collectivisation of agriculture, the extensive use of forced labour, as well as the sublimation of worker-led challenges to capitalism to the task of supporting the 'socialist motherland', is muted in the final lectures in the series.

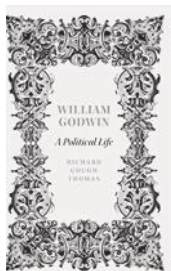
Despite these failings Rodney himself continued to pursue a revolutionary socialist line which led to his role in founding the Working People's Alliance in his native Guyana months before his assassination in 1980. His death at the tragically early age of 38 concluded the activism of a formidable Third World intellectual who sought always to develop his work in the service of social movements struggling for liberation.



## BOOK REVIEWS

# Anti-authoritarian pioneer

**Mike Davis**  
on a  
philosopher  
king



**William Godwin a Political Life**  
Richard Gough Thomas  
Pluto £12.99

**W**illiam Godwin (1756-1836) is claimed by the author to be the first major anarchist thinker in the Anglophone world—a philosopher educator. Godwin could equally be cited as an early socialist with his seminal *An Enquiry into Political Justice* containing many elements of later egalitarian and democratic thinking, though with an individualist streak. Neither anarchism or socialism were recognisable terms in Godwin's lifetime.

His key writings and work sat either side of the two centuries

when France was in the midst of revolution and political agitation for social reform and the franchise were growing in Britain.

Famously married to Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *Vindication of the Rights of Women* and mother of Mary Shelley, he lies at the heart of British radicalism and romanticism.

Thomas's book is a well-researched, readable study drawing on newly compiled letters and journals.

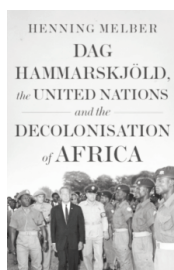
Godwin was anti-authoritarian and passionate about humans' ability to reason and work together ultimately making laws and government unnecessary. As

Thomas points out Godwin was not a revolutionary but sought change through writing and conversation. He also wrote novels, particularly *Caleb Williams*, histories and children's works.

Widowed through Wollstonecraft's early death he parented the children while falling in and out with the influential writers and thinkers of the time. Thomas divides his life into chapters: The minister, the philosopher, the activist, the husband, the father, the pensioner—while the philosopher theme runs throughout. He died in relative obscurity and a bankrupt but his literary and philosophical legacy lives on as this biography testifies.

# Secular Pope

**Nigel Watt**  
on the  
UN's saint



**Dag Hammarskjöld, the United Nations and the Decolonisation of Africa**  
Henning Melber  
Hurst £30

**I**t has been said that the United Nations was not created to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell." This was the mission that faced Dag Hammarskjöld, perhaps the most outstanding and the most controversial Secretary General of the United Nations. A profoundly moral man, he took the UN charter very seriously and tried to interpret it in the context of events, which meant for him to stand up for all the members of the UN and thus to stand up to the big powers, who did not like it. This involved strengthening the General Assembly vis-à-vis the Security Council. During the tenure of Trygve Lie, the first Secretary General, the UN was a creature of the 'western powers' but the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the arrival of Nehru and other leaders of the Non-Aligned Movement changed the dynamics.

Hammarskjöld tried to mediate in the Suez crisis but the Anglo-French-Israeli attack went ahead anyway. It also led to the UN becoming effectively anti-colonialist: a resolution on the rights of self-determination for all states was passed in 1960—with Britain, France, Portugal and the US abstaining.

Twenty-five African countries

became independent during Hammarskjöld's tenure and his attention began to be concentrated on them. He saw the UN's role as "a type of midwife for the birth of newly independent developing countries"—but aid should be for an initial period only and multilateral.

He visited South Africa in 1961 making his views on apartheid clear and earning him the enmity of that regime. But the latter part of his time in office was dominated by the events in the former Belgian Congo, where the hastily concocted independence settlement fell apart within weeks and the mineral-rich province of Katanga seceded with military support from Belgium backed by capitalist mining interests. Hammarskjöld, who had created the first UN force for Egypt organised a second one (ONUC), recruited from neutral countries, which was rapidly sent to the Congo—but it failed to prevent the capture and death of the Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba. Hammarskjöld said he wanted Lumumba to be part of the solution but many, including the non-aligned countries, blamed him and the UN for Lumumba's death and refuted his claim to have "kept the Cold War out of Africa." Rather, they reckoned he had tried to keep communism out.

The Soviet Union called for his resignation, but most UN members supported his aim of ending Katanga's secession—and Hammarskjöld—"more a General

than a Secretary"—at this point tried and failed to solve the problem by attacking the Katanga forces which were mostly international mercenaries. The situation was dangerous and in September 1963 Hammarskjöld decided to try to settle the dispute peacefully by meeting the Katanga leader, Moïse Tshombe in Ndola, Zambia, then Northern Rhodesia (the country where I had just started working). His plane crashed before landing. Crocodile tears were shed in Rhodesia, Britain, Belgium and the US.

The suspicion that it was a plot and not an accident was given new credence in Susan Williams' book, *Who killed Hammarskjöld?* (see my review in *Chartist* in 2011). Soon after this an Inquiry Trust, of which the author of this book is a member, was created, and, which in turn appointed a formal commission of enquiry, the efforts of which persuaded Ban Ki-moon to start official UN investigations. These are described in this book. The UK and US have not co-operated.

This book describes a complex and sensitive man whose vision contributed positively to the development of the UN system and who tried to work for a better world despite the messy reality of world politics. It throws light on a moment when the UN was trying to find its feet, as were the many new states of Africa, and how the two interacted. It also provides an update on the question of who killed him.

# Socialist, Feminist and Internationalist

**Duncan  
Bowie**  
on Ellen  
Wilkinson

**Red Ellen**  
**Laura Beers**  
**Harvard £24.95**

Remembered mainly for her role in the 1936 Jarrow March and her book *The Town that was Murdered* and to a lesser extent for her short and not very successful time as Minister of Education between 1945 and 1947, Wilkinson had a much more significant role not just in the British labour movement but in the international feminist and socialist movements. Wilkinson was probably the most important woman socialist in the Labour Party in the 1930's and 1940's and was a junior Minister (in charge of air raid shelters) in the wartime coalition before becoming only the second Labour cabinet minister, Margaret Bondfield being the first as Minister of Labour in 1924.

It is however Wilkinson's earlier and frenetic political life that makes her worthy of this biography. Beers is an American academic and this biography, which is excellently researched, gives most attention to Wilkinson's role as international socialist, feminist and anti-fascist - it is only the last 50 pages which cover her Ministerial career - Wilkinson was to die in office, apparently of an (accidental) overdose of sleeping pills.

Wilkinson, like many of her fellow party leaders in the interwar years, came from a working-class background: active in the distributive workers union, she was a Manchester city councillor, before becoming MP for Middlesbrough in 1924. A member of the ILP from the age of 16, she joined the Communist Party on its foundation in 1920. Never married, her intimate friendships included the Comintern agent Otto Katz, the socialist illustrator Frank Horrabin and Herbert Morrison.

Wilkinson should however be judged on her own merits not on her relationships. Wilkinson was a long-term member of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party, a friend and supporter of Stafford Cripps's popular front movement in the late 1930's but choosing to stay in the party

when Cripps was expelled. She became Labour Party chair in 1945 and oversaw the Blackpool conference which set the policy for the 1945-50 Labour Government. A lifelong suffragist and feminist, Wilkinson was not a separatist. A vigorous campaigner on welfare issues such as equal pay and equal pensions for women, her focus was on policies which impacted on the working class as a whole.

A campaigner against unemployment and for investment in what were referred to as 'the distressed areas', she was also a prolific journalist, writing for *Plebs* and *Tribune* but also in the *Daily*

range of organisations which were within the Communist Front networks set up by Willi Munzenberg, whose main operative, Otto Katz was a close friend of Wilkinson's and travelled with her to Spain. This visit, in the middle of the Civil War, also included the anti-fascist Conservative MP, Kathleen, Duchess of Atholl, who wrote the Penguin Special *Searchlight on Spain*, based on information, apparently supplied by Katz.

Wilkinson was also an active member of Krishna Menon's India League, which campaigned for Indian independence. Wilkinson visited India and co-authored their *Condition of India* report in 1934 which provided a devastating if somewhat partisan critique of British administration. Wilkinson, a regular visitor to Germany, also produced one of the earliest critiques of Nazism - a pamphlet on the *Terror in Germany* in 1933, which was followed in 1935 by the book length *Why Fascism?*, written with the German communist exile Edward Conze. It examined the failure of German socialists and communists to defend the democratic Weimar republic.

While Wilkinson was prepared to work with the Communists in joint campaigns, she was no naïve fellow traveller and was highly critical not just of Soviet policies, but also of the British and German national communist parties. She was later to become more fiercely anti-Communist and is often seen as moving to the right politically. This derives partly from her association with Morrison and his attempt to replace Attlee as Labour leader. Wilkinson saw Attlee as weak, but this did not stop her from having public disputes with Morrison, for example when she refused to delay the commitment to raise the school leaving age, first to 15 and then to 16.

In the final years of her life, despite her illnesses, Wilkinson returned to the international stage, attending the founding conference of the UN and in fact chairing the founding meeting of UNESCO, the UN's Educational Scientific and Cultural organisation.



*Express* and *Time and Tide*. She wrote two novels - *Clash*, which was an autobiographical novelisation of her experiences as a propagandist in the General Strike of 1926, which is well worth reading and a crime novel *The Division Bell Mystery*, featuring an oil mogul shot in parliament - Wilkinson was a fan of Agatha Christie, and this is perhaps not the most successful imitation.

Perhaps the most interesting sections of this biography, are those covering Wilkinson's international role, both in international women's organisations, but also in anti-fascist bodies and a wide

**(LAST) VIEW FROM STRASBOURG**

**Julie Ward is a Labour MEP for NW England (until January 31)**

# Keep the EU flag flying

## Julie Ward on taking internationalism to the streets

**T**he General Election result was deeply disappointing for all those who campaigned to stop Boris Johnson, but the disappointment and dread post December 12th is not just for progressive pro-Europeans here in the UK - it also rings warning bells across Europe.

The UK has historically been held in great affection by most of our neighbours who adore our pop stars, watch our television programmes and learn our language from an early age. Quaint British customs are aped adoringly and our aberrations usually forgiven. But those watching the regressive Westminster political drama from across the sea have, like many of us, continued to hope that somehow we would find a way to stop the slide into dangerous isolationism outside the EU. Barring a miracle that hope now seems to have been extinguished.

When the ill-advised referendum took place in 2016 the eyes of the world were upon us. I heard a touching story from a Lithuanian colleague, MEP Laima Andrikiienė, whose nonagenarian mother stayed up all night to watch the results. Laima did not and awoke on the morning of June 24th to hear her mother saying, "We've lost!"

This story has haunted me. The collective ownership of British values by pro-European non-Brits, especially by those whose recent memories of totalitarianism and fascism remain intact and ingrained, is not easily understood by either the British public or our politicians, many of whom choose

to remember the far-distant Empire rather than deeply reflect on the consequences of two world wars. There is an appalling absence of historical referencing in public discourse.



course to such an extent that a poll conducted by the HMDT in the lead up to Holocaust Memorial Day in 2019 found that more than 2.6 million British people believe the holocaust is a myth. The survey also found that 8% of our population claim the scale of the genocide has been exaggerated.

Aspects of Theresa May's 'hostile environment' echoed the sentiments of 1930s Germany, for example the 2013 'go home' vans. Instead of countering this Conservative pandering to right wing populism, the Labour Party cooked up its own version with the infamous anti-immigrant mugs. Instead of boldly championing the benefits of freedom of movement from the outset the Labour leadership joined in the hue and cry with the ill-advised call for "British jobs for British workers" rather than campaign along the lines of 'decent work for all workers'.

After years of politicians of all colours telling us that the EU was responsible for the problems in our NHS and our education service, for increased crime and disorder and for general interfering in British society, it's no wonder that Johnson's simplistic 'Get Brexit Done' slogan translated into votes from a certain demographic.

This election was most certainly about Brexit and it's a shame the Labour Party did not face up to that and embrace the opportunity to boldly champion its progressive internationalist values. The party's dogged focusing on domestic issues whilst shunning the biggest political question of our time, has done it no favours. By sitting on the fence for the last few years we leaked support

on both sides of the argument. Even many of those who voted for us in 2017 had grown fed up with waiting for a decisive position, whilst EU27 citizens have, quite frankly, felt abandoned by Labour.

So as we exit a political, economic, cultural and social union that has acted as the scaffold for a European peace project and provided a relative buffer against the worst excesses of Conservative economic and anti trade union policies we would do well to reflect on the future of Europe not just the future of a threatened United Kingdom with a resurgent nationalism in Scotland and Ireland.

The Party of European Socialists must become more not less important in Labour's future relationships. We must take our place within all its structures alongside comrades from Norway, Switzerland, Turkey and many of the Balkan states who are, ironically, desperate for accession to the EU. We must be more present in PES Women where people like Barking & Dagenham Labour councillor, Sanchia Alasia, have already made their mark. We must stand in solidarity with socialist and democrat LGBTIQ+ comrades through the PES Rainbow Rose network, and we must support our young members to attend the regular Young European Socialists' summer-camps. We must also work at grassroots level with social partners and encourage networking via organisations such as SOLIDAR and the European Anti-Poverty Network. Like liberation theologians, our work must now be on the streets, visibly on the side of the poor and vulnerable, standing with all those who are other. **G**

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